THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

EDITED BY

Rev. F. HASTINGS, M.A.

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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST JOHN

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The aim of THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE is to preserve all that is worth preserving of the modern interpretation of the Bible. It is the thought rather than the expression that is retained, though the expression has not been rejected when it seemed worthy. So much, however, has been done in the way of condensing, re-arranging, re-writing, adding to, and illustrating, that the sources have not as a rule been given. But so far as these are published sermons, they will be found in the Index to Modern Sermons which accompanies each volume. THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE contains also much that is new, written by the Editor and others.

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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST JOHN

Christian Unity

John x. 16.—'And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.'

Christ has been telling in two parables of the Shepherd and the sheep; of Himself as Shepherd, of His one flock and fold among the Jews, of those who, hearing their Shepherd's voice, had followed Him and were His own. And then He paused, or so it seems, and was silent for a time, and ceased to look at the disciples. And in His eyes, as we picture the scene, rose that far-off look, so often His, which was so inexplicable to the Apostles—the look of One who saw opening before His eyes the endless future. And while they were silent and puzzled, suddenly, as if in a soliloquy, came these strange and beautiful words, the revelation of His inmost soul, the prophecy of a perfect result, the vision at the end, of one flock and one Shepherd. He saw the Gentile world redeemed. Other sheep I have—other than the Jews—who are Mine, whom I must bring, who shall hear My voice.

Let us begin by reminding ourselves that our Lord does not say that these other sheep are all to be brought into one fold. What He does say is that He must lead His other sheep, not of this fold, that they may all be one *flock*. The *folds* may ever be different; the *flock* is always to be one. The great Gentile world is to be gathered round the Shepherd, and that is better than being penned in one fold—at least that is where the necessity lies. The change in the original from 'fold' to 'flock,' says Bishop Westcott, 'is most striking, and reveals a new thought as to the future relations of Jew and Gentile. Elsewhere stress is laid upon their corporate union, and upon the admission of the Gentiles to the holy city; but here the bond of fellowship is shown to lie in the common relation to one Lord. The unity of the Church does not spring out of the extension of the old kingdom, but is the spiritual antitype of that earthly figure. Nothing is said of one "fold" under the new dispensation.

'It may be added that the obliteration of this essential distinction between the "fold" and the "flock" in many of the later western versions indicates, as it appears, a tendency of Roman Christianity, and has served in no small degree to confirm and extend the false claims of the Roman see.'

1. 'That they all may be one.' We hear much to-day of the reunion of Churches, but comparatively little of the unity of Christians. In an age of organizations in which machinery has become so fixed an idea in the minds of men, it is easy to understand how the mechanical has taken possession of those minds to the neglect of the spiritual. Church Union can only be the fruit of Christian Unity—if the Union is to be permanent and effective for good. Whenever Union has taken place and worked successfully as a witness for the Truth, it has come about through the operation of spiritual motives working in the hearts of men who have a common attitude to Truth, a common faith in the one Lord, and a common dependence on the Holy Spirit of God to keep them knit together in one Body. Efforts at corporate reunion have failed, and will fail, so long as they have not behind them the ideal of our Lord, the one flock and the one Shepherd, and a great spiritual urge, a white-heat devotion to the Master. Love on the Shepherd's part is the bond which connects each one of them with the Shepherd—a love so strong that He is ready to die for them; love, therefore, is the bond which must unite each member of the flock with his fellows. We might say that when the Master gives to His followers the new commandment to love one another even as He has loved them, He is telling them how to become one flock under Himself.

One who had passed through many trials and had a vision of Unity which failed has written: 'Lay the unity of the Church upon nothing but what is essential to the Church. Own no man's errors, or sins, but own every man that owneth Christ and whom Christ will own, notwithstanding those errors and infirmities that he is guilty of. Bear with those that Christ will bear with; especially learn the master-duty of

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self-denial, for it is self that is the greatest enemy of catholicism.' There is profound truth in these sentences. The man or men who set themselves up as Apostles of Unity and narrow the bounds of Christian union by insisting on their own viewpoint, their own interpretation, and their own narrowness or fancied breadth, as the measure of union, make a fatal mistake. They are sophists who make themselves the measure of Divine love and their ideal of Church Unity the limit of the Divine comprehensiveness. Whereas the teaching of the New Testament is plain—it is that of the Church larger than any fold or union of folds can express —it is union with Christ, membership of His Flock, in spite of many imperfections and much failure, that determine whether men may or may not be comprehended in the Body of Christ. It is for man to refuse to unchurch any who are within the Flock of Christ and not make his own fold the only one. Is it not a little volume entitled *Lyra Germanica* which tells us that the greatest schism is separation from the brother or sister in whom we acknowledge the Spirit of Christ to be dwelling?

¶ Here is a passage in that remarkable book *Christ at the Round Table*. 'The Christian Church is terribly divided. The number and narrowness of our sects is a scandal. But, if we only realized it, we are the most united people on earth. And united in the deepest essentials of life. Our Round Table Conferences revealed this. At the centre, at the place of Christian experience we are one. We do not have to strive for unity, or ask for it; we have it. No matter who was speaking, whether it was an Easterner or a Westerner, a brown man or a white man, a High Church Anglican bishop or a Salvation Army officer, a Protestant or a Roman Catholic—wherever men experienced Christ in reality we felt they were one. Outward differences fell away as irrelevant. When we have experienced Christ we realize that the same Life throbs through us all, the same Christ of experience holds us together in the deepest unity that life can find. The Christian Church is the most united body on earth when it is really Christian.'

¶ Whittier many years ago expressed the same fact in briefer form. 'If I had nothing else to be thankful for,' he said, 'I should still feel grateful that I have not become a bigoted sectarian. To me Quaker and Catholic are alike, both children of my Heavenly Father, and separated only by a creed, to some, indeed, a barrier like a Chinese wall, but to me frail and slight as a spider's web.'

2. It may be that unity of Church organization and unity of creed are not desirable. Uniformity and unity are not the same thing, and either may exist without the other. Indeed, it may be doubted whether uniformity is not more of a hindrance than a help to unity. Uniformity is certainly a serious limitation of liberty; and liberty is the soil in which living unity is likely to flourish. Liberty is a sign of the presence of God's Spirit; 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty'; and where the Spirit of the Lord is not, neither the unity which Christ promised, nor the love which He commanded, is likely to spring up. There was uniformity in the Middle Ages, but can we say it was satisfactory? There was but one Church in Spain, and in some states in South America, but this unity has not resulted in the development of a high type of Christian life. Roman Catholicism is seen at its best in Protestant countries like England, Germany and the United States, where it exists amid variety.

¶ 'It is not desirable that any one Church should absorb the rest,' said the Primate of Ireland, referring to the Malines Conversations. 'The world would be very much poorer if that happened; and if reunion led to the creating and restoring of a universal hierarchical system dominating human life in all its parts and dictating doctrine and discipline, it would be the greatest disaster which could possibly befall mankind.'

3. In this age, however, we feel acutely that many of our divisions are disastrous, the more when secular influences are so strong and a united witness is urgent. And especially is this true in the mission field, where a new world is emerging before our eyes. Foreign missions have a unique opportunity to-day, and are calling aloud for support, and we are wasting our resources here at home. What is perhaps worse is that we are perpetuating a spirit of sectarianism amongst other races which militates against the growth of our common Christianity. Many of our missionaries realize the danger, and are striving to lay the foundations of a larger Church.

¶ Vividly do I remember a certain incident when on a visit to Transjordania a few years ago. Riding away from a village early one morning with my friend the missionary, who had recently started a promising work there, we saw some little way off on another path a figure dressed in what looked like some ecclesiastical garb, obviously a European, riding in towards the village with one or two walking beside him. I asked my friend who it was, and was told it was a Roman Catholic missionary, who, the moment he had heard of work starting in this out-of-the-way spot under Anglican auspices, felt it incumbent upon him to try and find an opening for his own mission in the same place. And that kind of thing is happening all over the world, not only as between Roman and non-Roman communions, but between all sorts of Christian Churches who ought to be working in the closest possible co-operation. As a Moslem once said to that wonderful missionary and man of God, the late Canon Gairdner of Cairo: 'Become a Christian! What sort of Christian? Was your Christ born twice and did He die twice?'[1]

The Apostle Paul in his day answered his Lord's prayer when he drew Jew and Gentile together into one Church and saw the barriers all down. And in later days David Livingstone, when white men and dark men sat down together at the Communion Table. How many have stood by his grave in Westminster Abbey and read the words of our text on the stone which marks it—'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring'? And the thought that if two of Africa's sons at such cost brought home over thousands of miles the body of their master because of their love for him, counting no effort too great, must we not realize with new force the love of Livingstone's Lord and our Lord which breaks down racial and all other barriers?

As we look back over the last half century we can trace a decided growth in the spirit of unity. The relation of the Churches to one another has changed, intercommunion is not uncommon, and many causes of contention have passed into the realm of accepted truth.

Other forces too are making for unity. There is the spirit of the times which puts much more emphasis on solidarity than upon independence. And scholarship has undermined the old assumption that the New Testament gave us a clear-cut system of Church government to which we must conform. Where there is life there must be growth, and if the leadership of the Spirit is a reality the Church has not only a right, but an obligation to change its polity according to the needs of the times. And there are many other forces making for unity, not the least of them being anti-Christian thought, and anti-Christian ways of life which cause the leaders of all Churches to get together in prayer and conference. We realize that whatever our differences, we need one another and cannot afford to stand in proud isolation.[1]

Union in work is an effective way of bringing men together. Fighting in a common cause kills prejudice, and sympathy draws men together. The Conferences, for instance, convened by the World Alliance, brought together representatives of Churches of all nations for securing peace by promoting friendship. In the common work they found a union, a union in loyalty to Christ, which went deeper than the differences which had kept them apart. They came to think of the Church as the company of those in every land who find God their Father, Christ their one Lord and Saviour, and in all men their brethren. It has been the same in our own country. We have stood together on Temperance platforms, we have united as Christians in work for social purity and social reform. We have made friends and have realized that all who believe and call themselves Christians have a common outlook on life, a common ideal which they desire to realize. When we find our ideals are the same, our differences seem of less importance. Common work leads to common worship. When people work together they soon find themselves praying together. At many of our Conferences, especially international, we have been struck with how naturally those present have come together for worship, and have knelt together at a service of Holy Communion. All one in Christ Jesus.

[1] E. S. Woods, *A Faith That Works*, 152.

The Dignity of our Lord's Death

John x. 18.—'I have power to lay down my life.'

THESE words strike a note of their own amid our Lord's sayings on His approaching death. They carry within them an unusual and memor-

[1] F. H. Ballard.

able suggestion of reserve and dignity, a hint of the majesty in which the Saviour offered Himself, unhurried and uncompelled. Here is no helpless victim of circumstance, no mere prey of the mighty, caught in the man-traps of a world's hate. Here is One who, uncompelled, offers Himself.

¶ There is a passage in Amiel's *Journal* in which he says that Napoleon with his arms crossed over his breast is more expressive than the furious Hercules beating the air with his athlete's fists. 'People of passionate temperament never understand this. They are only sensitive to the energy of succession: they know nothing of the energy of condensation. They can only be impressed by acts and effects, by noise and effort. They have no instinct of contemplation, no sense of the pure cause . . . which does not need to throw itself into violent motion to be certain of its own power.'

1. Two important things are done here for our thinking on this whole theme.

(1) The first lies in the vision of the self-determination of our Lord, with all that is implied of reserve and dignity. He is the Captain of His own soul in becoming the Captain of ours. This is important for a practical reason. One of the reasons why some modern minds halt before the Christian ethic and hesitate to launch themselves upon a sacrificial life, is that it seems like a slave-morality to lay oneself down in front of one's fellows and be trampled upon by every foot, and drained by an endless demand. If we take this utterance of our Lord, and use His life and actions as a commentary upon it, it becomes plain that His conception of sacrificial living and sacrificial loving was very different from that at which we have just hinted. He was not a passive agent, letting Himself be trampled upon without discrimination or be drained as much by men's whims as by their needs. His conception of love was not merely to give to all who asked all they asked for. When they asked Him to be a judge and a divider, He refused to shoulder a responsibility that was not meant for Him and gave them instead a parable and a sermon.

¶ There are some wise words on this point in Dr Newman Smyth's *Christian Ethics*. Speaking of love to one's neighbours he says: 'A friend who does not keep himself in the pure worth of his own soul has nothing worth giving to another. True self-love (not love of the happiness of self but of the worth of the self) is therefore an antecedent condition of all genuine and worthy love of others.' And he adds, regarding the law of self-sacrifice which Christ followed to the Cross: 'He did not give up His real and eternal selfhood for the world; He kept Himself in perfect integrity beneath God's eye.'

There is something here which is very close to some of our practical perplexities. Christian sacrificial love is not to give everyone all he asks, but to offer to God and to man the best we can do, and the best we can be, for man and for God. When we hear our Lord say, 'I have power to lay down my life,' we are close to that same lesson. He does not regard His life as a ball to be tossed lightly about, or to be crushed by any hand that cares to grasp it. He holds His soul like a citadel in trust for God's service and man's true welfare, and He retains His self-direction, subject only to the overruling will of His Father, as that will shall progressively reveal to Him His true path of obedience and service.

(2) But these words do a second thing for us, not inconsistent with that first thing: they supply a needful corrective to our usual idea, which is apt to be the world's idea, of power. When men think and speak about power, they tend to think too exclusively of power to dominate, and far too little about power to serve. Yet it is well to remember how great a part that second kind of power has played, and does still play increasingly, in the life of the world. Though the Great War is now fading into the past, we are still thinking out its lessons. What delivered us in those sombre and cruel years? Was it power of guns, or power of allies, or power of finance? All these things in their measure; but they would all have been useless had there not been in the sons of our race a vast latent power of sacrifice, power to lay down their lives.

¶ During the War some men of the West Yorkshire Regiment were marching through the long, narrow street of a village near Rheims when a man suddenly dashed from a doorway on the right. Immediately a number of rifles cracked in front of the troops, and the man fell dead. He proved to be a soldier of the Royal Irish Regiment, who had been taken prisoner the previous day, and was held in a house where

some Germans were lying in ambush. He was safe, comparatively safe, so long as he kept quiet, and although he knew that the slightest movement on his part meant death when the British approached, he flung himself into the open, not with any hope of dashing to safety, but to draw upon himself the fire of the Germans that would disclose to his friends the ambush that was waiting for them. He made his choice between safety and death deliberately, and, like many another soldier in those years of carnage, laid down his life for others.[1]

Benjamin Kidd's *The Science of Power* is full of suggestions to anyone interested in politics, or ethics, or the problems of human society, whatever the philosophers may have to say to the validity of his argument. His position is that the Darwinian doctrine of evolution—the theory of development through the struggle for existence—carries us only a little way. It accounts for the efficient individual: the inefficient perish, the efficient survive. But then he goes on to show that evolution has now reached a new stage, the social stage, and at this stage a new law works. In the struggle for his own development the individual had to assert himself: now in the struggle for the perfected society the individual has to learn to subordinate himself. Here lies the vast scarcely-tapped reservoir of power for the future. The society that is going to survive is the society which has learned this lesson best. In social development the eternal law of efficiency can only be summarized in one word—Sacrifice. . . . The progress of humanity has over and above every other feature this meaning. It is the epic of the vast, tragic, ennobling, immortalizing, all-conquering ethic of Renunciation. If that be in any measure true, then our Lord when He said, 'I have power to lay down my life,' was not only stating His own personal power and obligation; He was illustrating a principle vital to human progress.

2. There are two practical results for those who believe and would obey.

(1) We bow with adoring and endless gratitude before the Lord Christ, who in His life and death brought the sacrificial principle to its full fruition. This idea of power must not be lost sight of: His use of it here ought to refashion the moral universe and be like a talisman against worldliness and against materialism. All the way along, those who knew Him felt a strange suggestion of power about Him. There was power of healing, power of teaching, strange power over Nature's forces, as if He were in some mysterious way allied with the ultimate sources of control. But it was all power of service. And the power in Him had not turned to weakness—rather it had mounted to its greatest intensity, it clothed itself in its uttermost sublimity, when at the last, in the exercise of His power over Himself, He stretched Himself upon the Cross. So He became the world's High Priest, and so the Cross became an Altar indeed, strange, rude, repellent, yet never to pass as other altars passed, the one Shrine for ever for souls that know their need and their sin. Because He incarnates in Himself a principle which is neither arbitrary nor accidental, but is set into the very nature of things and into the course of this world's events, it is no surprise that a listening ear should overhear every creature saying, 'Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.' We who, being, like patriarchs and prophets, creatures of human sin and need, have sought long for the altar where we may meet with God, know that our quest is ended. He gave Himself for us. With Him we give ourselves to God.

(2) It is morally impossible to bend in adoration and gratitude before the sacrificial Christ without coveting something of the same spiritual likeness. Is this sacrificial way indeed God's chosen way of helping and uplifting the world? Then men who number themselves among His redeemed are in honour bound to be His helpers in the task. More and more it becomes apparent that there are no self-contained lives in human society, or rather that in proportion as men try to be self-contained and self-regarding they remain mutilated and incomplete. To acquire the sacrificial spirit may cost them much: to live without it may in the long run cost them more. 'Vicarious suffering,' says Dr Inge, 'which on the individualist theory seems so monstrous and unjust as to throw a shadow on the character of God, is easy to understand if we give up our individualism.' No Christian is called to give up his *individuality*: there the dignified self-direction of the Master teaches us a great and unexpected lesson. But

[1] *The Methodist Recorder*, April 21, 1927.

every Christian, by the fact of his being a Christian, is called to give up his *individualism*—his tendency to

> Live for himself and think for himself,
> For himself and none beside,
> Just as if Jesus had never lived,
> And as if He had never died.

Then the burdens and tasks that come are undertaken not with querulous claims for justice, but with the eager spirit of those who have seen the glory of service. 'I have power over my life'—that is true of every man as of Him, true within smaller limits, perhaps, but true.

'Tell us Plainly'

John x. 24.—'If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly' (R.V.).

Jesus had retired from Jerusalem because of His collision with the authorities. After an interval of a few weeks He returned, and came to the Temple at the time of the Feast of Dedication. This was a feast instituted by the Maccabees to celebrate the Purification of the Temple after it had been profaned by Antiochus Epiphanes. It was winter time, and Jesus sought the inviting shelter of Solomon's Porch. Being a public place it was quite accessible to all who cared to enter, and very soon He found Himself ringed about by a band of questioners. 'The Jews therefore came round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou hold us in suspense? If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly.'

It is instructive to notice the mood of these questioners, and to mark the occasion of their suspense. Their trouble and perplexity were caused by the apparent contradictions in Christ. On the one hand, He was completely unlike the Messiah they had been taught to expect. Their expectations of Messiah had been formed and fed by glowing chapters like the Seventy-second Psalm, with its picture of a mighty monarch to whom the Kings of Sheba and Seba were to offer gifts and who was to have the dominion from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. There was all the difference in the world between this mighty monarch and the 'meek and lowly Jesus'; they could not see the King in the peasant Teacher. That is really the difficulty suggested in the text. 'If *Thou* art the Christ—Thou—far as Thou art from our ideals and wishes—tell us plainly.'

But on the other hand, unlikely as His outward appearance was, there were certain things about Jesus which were continually startling the people and casting them into an amazed wonder. There were, to begin with, His *words*. They were marvellous words—charged with a wisdom and an authority absolutely new and strange to the people who listened to them. And then there were His *deeds*. The most amazing 'powers' revealed themselves in Jesus. He cleansed the leper, He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, life to the dead. Works of this kind had never been wrought by even the greatest of the prophets. And this contrast between Christ's personal appearance, the lowliness of His outward condition and His mighty works resulted in the most sharply contrasted views concerning Him. Some, fastening their eyes on the lowliness of His earthly state, said contemptuously, 'Search and see that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.' Others, impressed by His deeds of grace and power, said with Nicodemus, 'No man can do the works which thou doest, except God were with him.' While many more were left in suspense, sometimes thinking one thing and sometimes another. It was to this latter class that the people referred to in the text belonged. Westcott is emphatic that we must not assume that this request was made with any evil intention. It was a request made by people who were honestly in doubt and who did not know what to believe. They wanted Christ by some unmistakable word or deed to place His Messiahship beyond doubt or question.

The craving for certitude is in us all. There are great religious questions which are enveloped in doubt. The very existence of God is challenged; the nature of Christ—who He was and what He did—is still the subject of controversy and debate. And even if we take God for granted, the dispensations of His Providence are often shrouded in mystery, and we are not sure that love is the meaning of them. In our hours of difficulty and doubt, we almost reproach Him that He has not told us plainly. For that is the strange truth about Jesus—He does not tell us plainly. He did not give these Jews in Jerusalem the plain proof they asked for. He told them He had given them proof enough if

they had the discerning and spiritual mind. He did not give the Pharisees the 'sign from heaven' they asked for. He deliberately refused it. He left room for doubt, for question, for challenge. And so He does still.

1. What this request of the Jews asks for is that Christ should make the Divine purpose of God in redemption clear and plain to finite minds. And this Christ cannot do. Not because there is any limit to His power of revealing, but because there are very sharp limits to men's power of receiving and understanding. We can neither express the infinite in speech, nor grasp it with the mind. We can be plain, exact, specific, only when we deal with finite facts. If we can say all about a thing in a sentence, it is because the thing itself is a small, concrete, material thing. For example, we can put an exact account of the weather into a sentence. And wherever it is possible to be terse and concise and sharply definite, it is our duty to try to be so. In our concrete life, amid all outward things, most of us would be better understood if we said less. The things of the hour demand a plainness of speech that befits the definition and brevity of the hour. It is our duty to put a thing into a nutshell—if it is no bigger than a nut. But when we try to put illimitable truth into a nutshell, we leave a good deal of it out. It is impossible to put God into a syllogism or to define Him with the accuracy and exactness of a mathematical proposition. We may be quite sure that justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne, and yet clouds and thick darkness will be about Him. It is impossible to tell mortal men plainly about the infinite purposes of the infinite God. To know all about the Cross, for instance, we should have to know all about the meanings and issues of sin and all about the infinite holiness of God. It is too mighty a truth to be told 'plainly.' When we have done our best to understand and explain it, it remains true that there is

> A deep beyond the deep
> And a height beyond the height;
> And our hearing is not hearing,
> And our seeing is not sight.

¶ Lord Balfour, in his *Foundations of Belief*, says, 'If the Atonement were not too wide for our intellectual comprehension, it would be too narrow for our spiritual necessities.'

But if we leave the last word of the Jews' plea out of our reckoning, the plea itself is still a pitiably blind and vain one. 'If thou art the Christ, tell us.' That appeal, as it stands, reveals an utter ignorance of the way the truth makes its conquests in the souls of men. The truth depends strangely little upon verbal statement. Think of some of the great moments in our common earthly experience. We watch the path of the dawn growing wider across an eastward sea, or listen to immortal harmonies until we hear, as Keats has put it for us in one of the greatest lines of our language, 'the music yearning like a god in pain,' or we find the bitter-sweet meaning of love, or stand by a grave as deep as our heart, and we know something that could never have been told us and that we can never tell to another. Our silence may be the silence of the inarticulate, but it is also the silence of the enlightened. We know with a clearness compared with which the clearest speech is mere jargon. We see with a vision that words, like a flock of birds, would only darken with their wings.[1]

2. Christ did not speak plainly for the further reason that 'plain speech' would have been the destruction of faith and even of religion. Christ could not speak plainly, we have said. But suppose there had been no obstacles on man's side, would He have done so? No, if He had spoken plainly He would have left no room for faith. In the Christian religion the central place is given to faith. But this belief which saves is not belief in a set of propositions, it is not an intellectual process. We are so made that we cannot help believing certain propositions. For instance, we are so made that we must believe that two and two make four and that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. These are necessary mathematical truths, and the intellect cannot help believing them. But 'belief' in Christ is not belief of that kind. It is not a matter of the intellect only, but also of the heart and the will. It is trust in Him, the committal of our life to Him, and it is the result not of pure reasoning but of *moral choice*.

¶ I don't agree with you that anything so vital as Christianity ought to be indisputable—

> You must mix your uncertainty
> With faith, if you would have faith be.

[1] P. C. Ainsworth, *The Pilgrim Church*, 43.

If it is to be anything but *mere* intellectual consent, as if to the fact that the world is round, it must be the attitude of throwing oneself on the things that are highest and best in life, and committing oneself to the most lovable and strongest personality in all history—the attitude of saying 'I will take the side of this Man, the most perfect and most heroic who has ever lived; he *cannot* have been mistaken.'[1]

¶ 'For one,' Professor William James used to say to his students at Harvard, 'I choose to believe in God.'

Faith is the deliberate, and voluntary, choice of Christ. It is not a course to which a man is shut up. If he wants to reject Christ he can find reasons and arguments. Therefore it is that a man's attitude to Christ becomes a test of character, and his faith has moral value. It is an act of the will, a free choice. And by exercising such a choice the man reveals the attitude and bias of his soul. He chooses goodness, holiness, God. It is a saving faith.

3. Does it come to this, then, that we can never be sure? Are we never to be told plainly? Assurance is a blessing we all desire, certitude is a boon we all crave. And we may get it. What was amiss with these people was that they looked for proof along the wrong line. They wanted verbal, logical proof. But it is not to the intellect Christ demonstrates Himself, but to the conscience and to the soul. And it is not through the reason or by logic that Christ speaks plainly to us, but in experience. This is not to say that the intellect has no part to play in religion. The intellect has its rights. We must serve God with the mind. But after all it is not to the inquiring and curious mind that Christ reveals Himself beyond doubt or question, but to the soul that puts Him to the proof. If we make experiment of Him, staking life and eternity on the assumption that He is Redeemer and Lord, we shall *know* that He is the Christ.

¶ Lieutenant Simmonds, of Mansfield College, Oxford, before his death in action on the Somme, wrote, 'If Christ were not my strength I would commit suicide to-night. We must just wait in all penitence and humility before His Cross, seeking to hide nothing from Him, and fixing our soul's attention on that symbol of His strength, and that symbol of the suffering love of the Father. Then He will come to us (I speak because I know), and He will flood our life with the joy and peace of His Resurrection and glorification.'

[1] *Life and Letters of Maggie Benson*, 303.

Memory and Faith

John x. 40-42.—'And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode. And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on him there.'

1. This is a very moving incident that the Fourth Evangelist slips in between the two volumes of his life of Christ. The teaching days are over. They have not won the people. And, before entering on the story of the end, he tells us how Christ took it, what He did when He knew He had failed. 'He went away again beyond Jordan, into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode'—back to the hallowed spot where He had dreamed the big dreams that had come to nothing, and where He had received from John that last corroboration that had made Him certain of His mission, where God Himself, He felt, had called Him to His task, back to one of the most sacred of places in all the world for Him, where He would be closest to God.

Sometimes we come to places in life where we are so hard bestead that there is nothing for it but to get back post-haste to the scene of our early vows and our morning experience, where once we fought the battle out and obtained the great peace. Back to the spot away beyond Jordan; back to that pure enthusiasm and selfless surrender; back to the memory of our first Communion, or that day when love came into our life, or a new life came into our home; back to a better day which once we knew, that we may reassure and stablish our wavering spirits in the midst of the years. Have we ever touched higher water-mark than that in all our subsequent wanderings? A little wiser perhaps to-day, rather shrewder and more knowing. Wealthier maybe, more travelled, more famous, more successful as the world imagines. But away over Jordan there is a spot, a little Bethabara, where the really big things were afoot in youth's fresh morning long ago. Has earth been offering us its kingly crowns? Has life hurt and disappointed us? Are we not quite so sure of ourselves as we used

to be? Let us get back to Bethabara; back to the hallowed spot, as our Lord and Master went.

¶ One of my old pupils who had fallen (not through any misdeed of his own) into sore personal trouble, told me how, in the hour of his keenest anguish, he felt that the only thing which would give him comfort was to go down to Harrow on a Sunday evening and, during the service, to sit unobserved and unknown at the back of the chapel where he had worshipped in the old days, and so to regain something of the hope and strength which he had known as a boy among the boys who worshipped there.[1]

We must get back again—we must—we must!—
(Our rainy faces pelted to the dust)
Creep back from the vain quest through endless strife
To find not anywhere in all of life
A happier happiness than blest us then. . . .
We must get home—we must get Home again!

2. But not in a moment of passing sentiment. That was a great resolution which arose in the homesick heart making it cry aloud, 'I will arise and go to my father.' Harlots and hogs and husks have made many a prodigal turn a longing eye on a beautiful and gracious and far-away past. And the very memory has been the bitterest portion of a cup of bitterness. On with the story! 'And he arose, and came to his father.' It was not his longing thoughts but his trudging feet that brought him salvation.

And what is true of those impulses which lead to salvation for the sinner is equally true of those imperious summonses which call us back in our subsequent life to the places of dedication and consecration. In that hour when the forces of evil were massing against Him to thwart the pure intention of His soul, our Lord went away back to the spot where once He had seen His life's vision and accepted His life's commission. God had been in that; of that He was quite sure. So was His friend John. There, at any rate, was a fixed point in the soul's compass. There the searching needle could come to rest. There was the pull of the unseen star.

And having found His feet again, having got back to the old camping-ground of high loyalties and steadfast convictions and memories that fortified His soul, see what the sacred writer says. Again words that ring with determination. 'There he abode.' 'He went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.' He has won back to this that life once gave Him, and nothing will move Him from it, until He sees the next step clear again. 'And there he abode,' says the evangelist, letting us see Him digging Himself in.

Sometimes we must just do that in grim desperation. No power in earth or hell shall budge us. If we have to go down fighting we shall make our stand in this little ditch. This, at least, was the biggest and best thing we ever knew. Those who stand by may say it is thunder. Others, a little nearer the secret, may say it was one of life's angel-haunted hours. The man himself knows it for the voice of God.

3. 'He went away again beyond the Jordan, back to the spot where John had baptized at first.' People will watch where we naturally go in life's dark hours. They will want to know where we shelter, for their own dark hour will be on them before they know where they are. They will look to see if we have a Bethabara beyond Jordan. So did they watch our Lord. They watched Him go. They saw Him settle there. They remembered all that they had ever heard the great Baptist preacher say about this Man. And the sequel is here, and it is very gracious. 'Many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle; but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on him there.'

'Many believed on him there.' It had come at last. They refused to believe when He spake as never man spake. They remained hardened even while they saw Him heal the sick and raise the dead. But when they saw Him fighting His own lone fight; when they saw Him repairing to that spot of consecration, where neither the kingly crowns offered by a fickle mob nor the hurtling stones flung by His enemies could reach the quiet of His soul, 'many,' we read, 'believed on him there.'

They will. They may have been unimpressed by the words, and unmoved by the acts; but when they see Him fighting out His own fight they come to Him, and, looking on Him once again 'as he walked,' they said, 'Yes, John was right. He didn't put it a whit too strong when he said that this was the Lamb of God.'

[1] Bishop Welldon, *Recollections and Reflections*, 120.

It is one of the wonderful and gracious experiences of life that often we seem better able to attract and succour others in our times of weakness than in our hours of triumph and success. Faith mistrusts the shouts of certainty. John did no miracle. Well, what of it? He knew a good man when he saw one. He could tell when God was walking this earth.

And still many believe in Christ there who cannot take it upon the mere hearsay of a preacher. We may or may not believe what John the Baptist says about this Jesus. We may reserve our own judgment upon the teaching of the Church, as these men long ago seem to have done. But the day will come when we shall be forced to say, Yes, the preacher was right. And in that hour we shall come to Him too. We may not be able to understand in what sense there are three persons in the Godhead. We may be unable to understand how Christ, being the Son of God, could become Man, with a humanity complete and similar to our own. But we shall feel that nothing that has been said about Him is too high to be true when we find Him facing the spectres of life as we have to face them, and fighting them with the same kind of weapons which we ourselves must employ. We shall come to feel that this Man has mastered life, and that nothing in Nature or life can defeat Him.

Life has a way of driving us all back to our Bethabaras beyond Jordan. And where the Son of God sheltered and succoured His soul and found strength to go on to face all that lay before Him, we too shall find grace to renew our vows of youth. Among the hallowed memories of the big dreams of long ago we shall dedicate ourselves once again to God.

¶ 'Lord, if I have done iniquity,' wrote Ebenezer Erskine on the night that changed all life for him, 'I am resolved to do it no more. I offer myself unto Christ, the Lord, as an object proper for all His offices to be exercised upon. I take a whole Christ, with all His laws, and all His crosses and afflictions. I except against none of them. I will live for Him, I will die for Him. Only Thou must fulfil both Thy own part and my part of the covenant: for this is the tenor of Thy covenant, "I will put My spirit within them, and cause them to walk in My statutes: I will never, never, never leave thee nor forsake thee." Lord, upon these terms I renew my covenant this night; and I take heaven and earth, men and angels, sun, moon, and stars, the stones and timbers of this house to witness, that, upon these terms, I give myself away, in body, soul, and estate, all that I am or have in this world unto God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And upon these terms I subscribe myself Thy sworn servant for ever.'

The Home at Bethany

John xi. 1, 5.—'Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. . . . Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.'

THERE are three descriptive references in the Gospels to the little town of Bethany. It was 'at the Mount of Olives,' by which is suggested the charm of its situation and the fertility of its fields. It was 'nigh unto Jerusalem,' about two miles off. There its privilege, as being almost under the shadow of the Temple walls, is declared. But the Fourth Evangelist, writing many years afterwards, sets its abiding distinction in the words, 'Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.' Stratford-on-Avon is a place of pilgrimage because Shakespeare walked its streets, and Abbotsford draws men from all the ends of the earth because Scott invested it with romance. And many a simple upland village finds men and women wandering through its houses drawn by the magic of a name.

The home in Bethany was one of some refinement and even wealth. The marks of its ease of circumstance are set in almost every sentence of the story. So also is the fact that between the two sisters and the brother in this home there was the tenderest affection. And their happiness was enhanced and perfected by the fact that, in addition to the love they bore one another, they enjoyed the love of the Lord. 'Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.'

There came a day in one of His journeys to Jerusalem when Jesus lingered by a door in Bethany, and a woman with a kindly motherly heart offered the young, devout, Galilean Stranger the grace of an unquestioning Eastern hospitality. Think of the scene on that night, when, for the first time, Martha received Jesus into her house. When the swiftly passing twilight had gone, and the lamp had been lit and

set upon its stand, and when the evening meal was over, this young Stranger, with the calm on His brow and the haunting rapture in His eyes, began to speak. And that night, as the hour grew late, and the talk became good, and God and His holiness, and faith and its power, became the supreme realities, one silent listener's heart began to glow with thoughts his tongue never could express, one busy woman forgot the anxieties of her toil, and one deep and brooding spirit had a vision of the angels of God.

1. As we watch the inmates of this home we recognize the truth that their lives were governed by spiritual values. Every man's inner mind is disclosed, and every man's life can be estimated by what he prizes. The values of Martha and Mary disdained the secular and the carnal, and were set upon the spiritual. They rejoiced in the worship and service of God. They were sure that His loving-kindness was better than life. The sordid gain and the self-indulgent luxury, the rewards and the honours, the pleasures and the delights, which others pursued, hot-foot with eager desire, did not tempt them. So when Jesus spent His days of controversy in the Temple, face to face with secular-minded scribes, He went out at eventide to Bethany to breathe the atmosphere of those whose lives were governed by spiritual values.

Never were these spiritual values more depreciated than to-day. There have been periods of grosser iniquity, more wilful revolt against righteousness, bolder unbelief. But the sin of to-day is materialism, with its scorn and sometimes sheer ignorance of spiritual values. Its sense of wrong is concerned only with the things of earth and of time. The objects of its desire are rewards which appeal to the senses. Millions of men and women live as though the life of the flesh were all. And never has the world been more fascinating or more absorbing. The ends of the earth are on every man's horizon. The resources of civilization are being exploited to minister to men's pleasures. Life is no longer a school in which men are disciplined into strength, a field of battle where the chivalries of the soul do combat with evil, or a wilderness across whose wide distances men go on pilgrimage to the eternal city. Behind all this intense craving for the delights of things seen, there is a scorn of the spiritual values which governed the lives of Bethany.

¶ The closing years of Shakespeare's life are charged with a seldom understood significance. It has been thought strange, that when he was fifty-two years of age—a time when a man comes to the fullness and perfect exercise of his powers—he turned his back on London and its delights, to retire to Stratford-on-Avon. His name was held in high repute. His creative genius was recognized and applauded by those whose recognition had value. He found a high delight in the friendships so open to him. Yet he left them all and went back to the simplicities of the little town of his birth. It was the return of the greatest, sanest, wisest, most penetrating of minds to a life which was deeper and truer than that which holds a worldling's eyes.

2. In the story of this home we see the individualizing love of Christ. Martha and Mary and Lazarus differed from one another, but Christ loved them all alike. The sisters will, probably, always be held up as types respectively of the active and the meditative temperaments. They differed widely in disposition and character and temper. Now most of us are so partial and one-sided that we find it quite impossible to admire equally such totally contrasted characters. At any rate, we find it impossible to like them equally. If we are of Martha's active temperament, we do not care for Mary with her quiet ways; if, on the other hand, we are of Mary's mystical spirit, Martha's busyness frets and wearies us. We like people who are spiritually akin to us; we are repelled by those who are spiritually alien to us. We think of Martha as mundane in contrast with her more spiritually minded sister, Mary. No doubt she was a masterful and active woman, but that did not prevent her from being at the same time a woman of mighty faith. Practicality and faith are not antitheses. Martha had an almost limitless faith in Christ Himself. She had penetrated to the secret of His unique relationship to God, and it is from her lips this tremendous, sweeping, uncompromising expression of faith comes: 'And even now (after the death of Lazarus), I know that whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give it thee.' Jesus saw right into Martha's heart, marked the tireless service of her hands, and realized that the elder sister's life was a constant and trying sacrifice. He discerned her practical genius, her brilliant

capacities, her unfaltering truth of nature, her generous spirit and her unquestioning faith.

Jesus, and perhaps He only, understood Mary. To the disciples she was a perplexity, almost a trial. In her spiritual beauty she rose into zones of faith and adoration and sacrifice in whose air others could not breathe. We have no hint in Mary of a mind that could reason out the mysteries of the faith. The very words she utters seem to be echoes of what she heard on Martha's lips. But to her, as to all who have entered into the heart of the Christian revelation, Jesus was all in all. Not what Christ said, not even what Christ did, but what Christ was. When she fell down at His feet, it was the posture which revealed the attitude of her soul.

'Tis joy enough, my All in All,
At thy dear feet to lie;
Thou wilt not let me lower fall,
And none can higher fly.[1]

We may be tempted to think that Mary was lacking in the sterner and more difficult activities of every day. But Mary had no idle hand. Martha would not have demanded that Mary be bidden to rise and serve, had service not been the custom of her days. The constancy of household tasks soiled her hands as much as Martha's. But she knew what was highest and best in life. She had heard Jesus say, 'The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.' She had heard Him appeal, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' The whole world might cry, 'Who will shew me any good?' Her prayer was, 'Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me.'

It is strange that we know so little of Lazarus of Bethany. He was tenderly beloved by all who knew him. He made that adoring response to Christ's affection so often given by strong, still, diffident natures. Yet he is little more than a name, a dim, shadowy figure in the background of the story. We know enough, however, to lead us into a clear understanding. He belonged to Bethany, and, as in all likelihood the youngest of the family, was cherished with an almost motherlike devotion by his sisters. We know that he fell sick and died and was buried, and left deeply shadowed hearts behind. Twice only do we see his face. We see him once as he appears at the door of his tomb, and again as he sits at the feast, his face shining with the glow of a love too great for words. Yet all these things tell us less about him than a single expression on the lips of Jesus. He gave a name to Lazarus which He gave to no other: 'Our friend Lazarus'—the friend of Jesus! The sisters had marked this closest intimacy and they made it their appeal, 'He, whom thou lovest, is sick.'

The sickness of Lazarus could not fail to be a matter of concern to Jesus, for Jesus loved him. But the suffering God permits His friends has always a purpose. It is a service. Through human suffering God is working out His purposes of good.

This neglected truth may be clearly seen in the experience of Abraham—the friend of God in the Old Testament as Lazarus is in the New. God suffered His friend Abraham to pass through years of exile, of long childlessness, and of hope deferred, until his heart was sick. He consummated his suffering in the trial of his faith. The command to sacrifice, 'thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest,' was a bewildering anguish to Abraham. Yet in that suffering God worked out His great purpose of condemning human sacrifice. So Jesus used the suffering of His friend Lazarus. 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.' What did Jesus mean? He meant that in the story of the Cross and the Tomb, the death and resurrection of Lazarus had a due place. That transcendent miracle stung the rulers into the resolve to carry out His death. Unfaith won its final triumph, and the Jews made ready the Cross. But on the other hand the miracle gave a faith to the disciples, and a glow to their enthusiasm, which carried them through the dark days at hand. That was the service Lazarus rendered to Jesus—very costly, charged with fear and pain and suspense and tears, and yet it was of all services the most unique.

'Jesus loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus.' All had an equal share in His affection. There is a veritable gospel in all this. It means that our Lord's love is a catholic and comprehensive love. Jesus has room in His heart for the most diverse of men. He has room in it for Thomas à Kempis brooding in his cloister, and for Martin Luther storming his way through a thousand

[1] Cowper.

fights. He has room in it for George Herbert, the devout Anglican, and for John Bunyan the Puritan. The saints are of every rank and class and type and temper, but they all find a place in that love whose length and breadth and height and depth passes all our knowledge.[1]

3. Christ enriched the home in Bethany with His love and sympathy. Let us think what that home did for Him. His was a life of intense labour, of constant travelling, of broken hours and scanty meals, a life of which He said, 'The Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' His ministry was one of ceaseless toil. Virtue went out of Him with every miracle. The voice that rang out by the lakeside, or called to the multitude on the feast day, was caught in soft echoes by the hills that heard His midnight prayers. He bore the burden of the sorrows of the people, and through it all carried the sin of humanity.

Six days before the Passover, we are told, Jesus came to Bethany, and He came for rest. When the day's teaching was done, and He had climbed the brow of Olivet, He entered into Martha's house, and the hush of God's peace abiding in the home fell upon His heart. When He moved within the circle of that home He found not rest only, but understanding, and solace, and bracing for His heart. It was a sanctuary of faith and courage. There He saw the Father's way and will more clearly than ever before, and in those six days He was prepared for the anguish of the garden and the agony of the Cross.

¶ In the engrossing volumes where the memoirs of Gurneys of Norwich are written—that notable family of the Society of Friends, of whom Elizabeth Fry was an illustrious member—there is a chapter which tells of the coming of young Fowell Buxton to the home. He had already yielded himself to the service of Christ. He had felt the first impulses of that moral passion which wrought out the emancipation of the slave, and the relief of the burdens which crushed the spirit of the poor. But he lived in a world full of men and women who scorned his principles, and were bitterly hostile to his endeavours. As he kept the company of these consecrated men and women he kindled the lamp of his service anew at the pure flame of their devotion, and he gave himself, in a renewed faith, to that life of costly toil and high endeavour for which men revere his name.[1]

There is no need more clamant than that of consecrated homes. The Christian faith and the Christian Church are dependent on the Christian home. And it is out of homes like that of Bethany that there come the men and women who do great things for God.

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Lord of Life and Death*, 41.

Life's Moral Mysteries

John xi. 6. 37.—'When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. . . . And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?'

Human life, however we regard it, whether personal or racial, under its physical, mental, or moral aspects, presents itself to us ever as a mystery. In those mysteries which belong to the physical side of life there is little, if anything, to disquiet us. The phenomena of birth and death are quite natural. They raise no moral problem. The further we inquire into these processes the simpler do they become to us. The mysteries that disturb us in the very depths of our being are *the moral ones*; those which challenge the goodness, or the wisdom, or the power of God.

They are focused for us in the incidents of this chapter. For what have we here? Practically a specimen of what, on the larger scale, is happening in the world of men every day. Here is a mystery common enough—that of a human life cut off in the midst of its years by sickness, its mission apparently unfulfilled. What makes the case more perplexing is that the victim is a special friend of Jesus Christ. He belongs to the inner circle of our Lord's intimates, yet Jesus does nothing at all to prevent this sickness running on to a fatal issue, and when at last the moment comes for love to act rapidly, He complicates the matter by an unaccountable delay. Surely the whole attitude of the Lord, at first sight, is puzzling. It is not difficult to understand the reproach which sprang to the lips of the bystanders: 'Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?' In this single story,

[1] W. M. Clow, *The Idylls of Bethany*, 156.

then, there is concentrated, as it were, the heart of all the moral mysteries of life.

Now, it is belief in God that converts the 'fatalities' of life into moral problems. But for man's invincible belief in Him there could be, strictly speaking, no moral mysteries at all. It is because we believe Him to be supremely wise, powerful, and good, and because we have the record of His mighty works wrought elsewhere and in other times, that a new problem arises at every new crisis when He seems to be inactive, and so even the best of men find themselves asking: Could not He who has done all *that* have caused that *this* should not be? It is His apparent non-interference and His delay that trouble the heart. He loves me, yet He does not answer my long-continued prayer. He loves His Church, and yet again and again He suffers her to be defeated. He loves the world—He is its Master—and yet He allows it to break out into red war. Not only does He apparently abstain from interference, but when the actual crisis arrives He still delays His action. Human love hastens at the call of sorrow, its feet are swift; but *His* feet, the feet of love Divine, appear too often to be painfully halting. What is wrong? Is His love or His power or His wisdom at fault, or are we, after all, mistaken concerning the reality of those great things He is reported to have done elsewhere? So, in one form or another the old question is repeated: Could not this Man have caused that this should not be?

¶ George Bowen says in his beautiful book, *Love Revealed*: 'He takes extraordinary liberties with us. Believing in His love and having our own particular conception of what love is, we settle in our minds that a certain contingency can never by any possibility be allowed to come to pass. Against everything else we prepare—not against that. We feel that it would be an unpardonable outrage to His most holy nature to suppose for a moment that He should suffer *that* contingency to come to pass. And yet that is the very thing that He brings to pass. We had boasted of the love of Jesus among our neighbours and told them that He would not suffer our brother Lazarus to die, but would assuredly come and restore him to health; and, lo! Lazarus dies and is buried, and it is much if our sense of the love of Jesus be not buried with him. He takes, what seem to us, frightful liberties with our sensibilities and with our trust.'

Let us look, then, at this chapter of the Gospels and see how in this microcosmic case the problem is treated. Everything is not solved for us here, but we have a flood of light upon the central moral mysteries of life. Four things strike us in the story.

1. By some the problem was treated as a purely emotional one. 'Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!' Jesus betrayed at the grave of His friend, an emotion, the like of which we have no record upon any other page of the Gospels. He was shaken with deep feeling, moved to the depths of His soul. Certain Jews who beheld His grief were impressed far more with that outburst of emotion than they were with the moral problem that was before them. To them, indeed, there was no mystery, no problem at all. Lazarus was no kin of theirs, they did not feel his departure. To them the incident was simply the sad case of a young man dying early. But what *did* arrest them was the emotional sorrow of Jesus. The thing to observe is, that these people were simply lookers-on. To them mourning was part of the music of life, only the notes were minor. They are the type of the majority who, in the presence of the deep mysteries of life and death see nothing more than the trappings of the funeral and the visible grief of the mourners. 'What a touching scene!' they say, and pass on to the next sensation. These are the men who have no vision and who, therefore, can never offer any light upon the deep problems of life.

2. The problem was treated by another section in a purely critical manner. It is what might have been that staggered them. 'Could not this man which opened the eyes of the blind have caused that even this man should not have died?' These Jews were not sure of Christ. Some of them were debating in their minds concerning Him; others of them were hostile to Him. These were the people who had witnessed His miracles, even admitting their truth, but who were not prepared to give to Him their allegiance. Now they seize this moment of what seems to them to be His failure, to challenge His goodness, or His power. These people also were simply lookers-on. They

were not deeply touched by the passing of Lazarus. He was no relative of theirs. The real problem of his passing lay outside their lives. To them the question was a purely critical one. Theirs was the spirit which can see only externals, and which measures everything by the blessing of the moment. This critical temper can never understand Jesus Christ, nor can it offer to men any light or healing. To it the ways of God must always be perplexing.

¶ Such was the temper of John Stuart Mill when he charged God with a failure of love, or goodness, or wisdom, for having created a universe in which there is so much suffering. Others better fitted than he to pronounce upon that subject, have come to a conclusion contrary to his. The attitude of Mill was that of the outsider—the looker-on.

3. We now enter a new atmosphere with the sisters. The two persons chiefly affected by this domestic disaster were Martha and Mary. It was their brother who had departed. Here was no 'general' problem for solution, it was one personal to themselves. Their hearts had been smitten. They were in the inner circle of Christ's disciples. Jesus loved them, and they loved Him. Because of that reciprocal love they understood Jesus as no outsider could possibly understand Him. They approached the problem in a manner wholly different from that of the looker-on. With them there is no complaint. They exercise in Christ a simple, whole-hearted confidence, and they do so because they know Him. They have no request to offer. They simply lay the case before Him. 'Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.' They make no suggestion as to what He shall do; they leave it to Him to act as He thinks best; they have perfect confidence in His love. Is it not remarkable that the persons most concerned in the loss are the persons who make no complaint, no criticism? But that is what we frequently see. The actual sufferer frequently gains an insight into the heart of life to which the academic student is a stranger.

¶ The doubts of God's goodness, whence are they? Rarely from the weary and overburdened, from those broken in the practical service of grief and toil, but from theoretic students at ease in their closets of meditation, treated themselves most gently by that legislation of the universe which they criticize with a melancholy so profound.[1]

The beautiful confidence of the sisters, however, has one defect. It is limited by the idea that a particular locality binds Christ. 'Lord, if thou hadst been *here*, my brother had not died.' It is not that they doubt His power or His love, but they feel that had He only been present earlier, the disaster would not have occurred. They had not yet learned that He could act in ways other than those to which their experience of Him bore witness. But through this passing cloud there bursts a ray of light. 'Even now,' cries Martha, although the case is desperate and the worst has happened, 'even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.' She believes to the end with a perfect confidence, and that confidence was justified in the final event. This is the temper that can best bear the strain of sorrow and support the load of mystery. It is not an idle, ignorant faith, but an intelligent assurance, based upon former experience, and kept alive by unfailing love, that God will do the right and the best thing.

¶ Two soldiers were toiling through the night over the trackless veldt, on one of Lord Roberts's great strategic marches. 'What is the use of it?' said one of the two, wellnigh worn out, stumbling on in the twilight over the rough and endless plain. 'Never mind,' said the other, 'come along, Roberts knows.'

4. Now we pass into the full light of the calm certainty of Jesus. To Him the problem was most acute of all. His own honour, the success of His mission, the salvation of innumerable souls, as well as the comfort of a stricken family, were all involved. How calmly does Jesus meet the situation! 'This sickness,' He says, 'is for the glory of God.' The end is not squalor but splendour. To the disciples He said: 'I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe.' Through this mystery they should gain a new force for the work to which He had designated them. In the soul of Martha He planted a deep hope, and from it evoked a livelier confession of faith, until she cried out with exultant joy: 'I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.' And finally, our

[1] Martineau.

Lord's heart turned towards the crowd—the undecided multitude around Him. 'I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.'

In these collected words of Jesus there is explained the meaning of His delay in offering succour to the distressed, and the meaning of His apparent unconcern in allowing His friend to die. The explanation is found in the revelation of His larger purpose. The critics saw only one man and one problem; Jesus saw a world, and that greater good which would enrich humanity as the result of this passing evil. For all gained through this mystery of sorrow—the disciples, the crowd, the sisters, and Lazarus himself. So in our own experience the calamity of a day has often proved to be the blessing of a lifetime.

¶ François Coppée, the distinguished French dramatist and Academician, has told us how he was raised up from a bed of dangerous illness to seek again and to rejoice in the forgotten faith of his childhood. He could say with the Psalmist, 'It was good for me that I was afflicted,' and one of his last books has on its title-page the words, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God.'

Here we have a principle which is illuminative for all life, a principle which covers all catastrophes and moral mysteries of every kind, whether in the individual or in the life of the race. For the real question at the bottom is whether the world has, or has not a Supreme Master. If it has not, what is the use of troubling at all about these set-backs which raise the moral problems? But if the world has a Supreme Master, then there is imposed upon us, to whom only the part is disclosed, the loving obligation exercised by the sisters of Bethany; that of putting our case into Christ's hands and trusting Him to bring all things to a glorious conclusion.

¶ 'To see the world under a big dome of the purpose of God,' says Professor Hocking, 'that is happiness, and that is religion.'

We believe in the ultimate purpose. Yet we must not believe this too cheaply. It is no light thing for us; it is no light thing for God. Jesus, fully conscious of what He was about to do in restoring joy to the stricken household, yet was 'troubled' and shaken to the very depths of His soul. Must we not believe that the Christ who remains the same throughout the ages, and to whom time is of no account, is still 'troubled' because of the world's evil? If it troubles Him it should trouble us, His disciples, and trouble us so much that we, in co-operation with Him, shall strive to restore the broken peace, to bring comfort to wounded hearts, and restore to liberty the grave-bound sons of men.

A Twelve-Hour Day

John xi. 9.—'Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.'

The growing hostility of the authorities compelled Jesus to seek refuge beyond Jordan, and it was there, apparently, that the message came to Him from Martha and Mary: 'Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.' Perhaps the two days that He remained in Perea encouraged the Twelve to think that He was now beginning to take care of Himself, and their amazement was all the greater when He said, 'Let us go into Judæa again.' It was a senseless rushing into danger. As Peter had done before at Cæsarea Philippi, they ventured to remonstrate. 'Master, the Jews even now were seeking to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?'

The answer of Jesus is striking. 'Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.'

1. The text lights up the courage of Christ. As we think of the application of His words to the situation, we see that His answer is the perfect answer. The disciples were appealing to fear, and to motives of personal safety. Christ was faced with the call of human souls for His help and mercy, and the disciples said in answer, 'Master, it is not safe!' It is not likely they had any gross personal motive of fear for their own lives. They were thinking only of Jesus and their error was the error of love. They only desired to shield their Master from the enmity of the Jews. Yet, without knowing it, they were dishonouring Christ, and Christ's relation to the world and to God. They were asking Him to save Himself and forget others. And their words contained this subtler

suggestion, that the providence of God could not carry anyone safely through danger. It is to this last suggestion that Jesus here replies. 'Are there not twelve hours in the day?' He asked. Does a man's life not lie in the lap of God? Are we not all under the providence of the Father?

¶ When Livingstone was in the heart of Africa, he wrote a memorable sentence in his diary. He was ill, and far away from any friend, and he was deserted by his medicine-carrier. But he was willing to go anywhere provided it was forward, and what he traced with a trembling hand was this: 'I am immortal till my work is done.'

Christ's own life was the finest example that it is a man's duty to face fearlessly the calls and tasks life may present. Duty is above everything: and duty, whether a life be long or short, can make it full. And if it be full, even though it has been but as a breath on glass, it has had its 'twelve hours.' The pathos of life lies not in its shortness, but in its misuse, long or short. For it is not quantity, but quality that counts, not the things we possess, but the things we are—ripeness and richness and fullness, qualities which are of the mind and soul, rather than of the body. With this belief, let each man face his duty, shirking no true danger, shunning no genuine call, avoiding no needed cross, looking to Him who is the master of all destiny—and let each man be convinced in his own soul that he shall have his full twelve hours.

2. That life has its twelve hours contains a warning against needless hurry, and fret, and disquietude of mind in view of the shortness of life, and of the largeness of our work.

We are more in need of this warning to-day than in any previous age of the world. The acceleration of modes of travel and of the processes of manufacture have somehow infected the very souls of men, and filled them with a fever of unrest which involves the death of some of the most precious things that life contains. This means hurry, and inefficiency in all directions. Nothing is done well if it is done in a hurry, for then the mind is only half given to the work in hand. But there is a worse effect on the mind itself, which is thrown out of gear, and filled with disquietude and discontent, so that its powers are not under control, and a sense of helplessness and misery weighs it down. Hurry means the loss of self-command, and without command of ourselves we can do nothing well.

Never was there a life of such untiring labour and at the same time unruffled calm as that of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. There was no one who ever had a work so manifold in its bearings, and which depended for its entire issue on its being done with absolute perfectness. Yet it had all to be crammed into two or three short years of public toil and ministry. Within this brief span a sinless character had to be perfected; the good news of the gospel had to be proclaimed, mighty influences for the redemption of the world had to be set moving. Truly, the brief ministry of our Lord was crowded as no other period of time ever was since time began, yet we never find the slightest suggestion of hurry, or rush, or over-pressure from without. In the midst of the most strenuous doings and utterances, surrounded by clamorous crowds who had no sense of fitness, no kindly consideration, but who demanded all manner of benefits with endless iteration, Jesus was always calm and self-possessed. With Him there was always time to do what had to be done, and His unhurried spirit never failed to meet the immediate call of the hour.

¶ I have known great and good men so terribly charged with missions that they can scarcely allow you five minutes, 'and then you must go,' if they will see you at all; and the effect of the concession on me is that I prefer to go in two minutes and not call again. I was interested in the remark of an eminent man of science: 'The great men always have time—look at Bateson,' he added. Sir Denison Ross has said he hardly ever caught the great Persian scholar, E. G. Browne, at work, though he certainly did an amazing amount of work on a very high level.[1]

3. There is time enough for all that God calls us to and all that love demands. There is time enough in a twelve-hour day, but there is no time to squander. The words speak of shortness, of limitation. Once our Lord looked at His work from this side—He knew how short His day would be. 'I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day,' He said, 'the night cometh when no man can work.' The

[1] T. R. Glover, *Saturday Papers*, 25.

swift passing of time and opportunity was ever for Him a call to be up and doing, and His eagerness to complete His work grew in intensity as the end came nearer. And so after His brief respite in Perea He went back to Judæa, even though He knew that the end of the lane was blocked by a cross. Most men, as Professor Lecky says, are afraid to look time in the face. But Christ was never afraid to look time in the face; He realized, as none has ever done, the sacredness of time and the worth of opportunity.

> Night comes behind,
> I needs must hurry with the wind,
> And trim me best for sailing.

We have but one day here and we needs must catch the speeding hours as they fly. Should not this passage of time lead us to think of what life means—of its aims and purposes, of its end and destiny, of the God who is in all and through all, and of our relation to Him? We would have men forget all about death, and have their minds full only of thoughts of life—real life, pure life, glad life. For if men really thought about life, and lived their life in Christ, death would have no fear and would hold no foreboding. If they realized what life is, and can be made: if they realized that they have twelve hours and no more; and if they thought to fill them full of goodness and honest work and honest living, full of a sacred meaning because full of God and His Christ, then their lives would have some of the goodness which is Christ's. Let there be no postponed settlements between us and life. There are big issues to face, things we must face one day, the things of God and our own soul. Let us face them gladly, for peace lies in doing so. Let us remember our life has twelve hours, no more, and it will be sunset before we dream of it. Let us get done what God has sent us here to do, and wait not for the fool's phantom of to-morrow.

¶ 'Tis the measure of a man,' said Emerson, 'his apprehension of a day.' 'He only is rich who owns the day. The days are ever divine as to the first Aryans. They come and go like muffled and veiled figures, sent from a distant friendly party; but they say nothing; and if we do not use the gifts they bring, they carry them as silently away.'

4. 'If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, but if a man walk in the night he stumbleth.' We have here a further suggestion which throws light on the attitude of Jesus towards His work, and on our own duty in life. If I try to add a thirteenth hour to My earthly day, by shirking difficult duties, and avoiding life's perilous places, I shall be walking no longer in the light, but in the darkness, where evil waits for Me, and failure. Had Jesus remained quietly in Perea, as His disciples wished, He might have easily prolonged His days, and lived to be an aged and honoured teacher, but not of Christianity, as we understand it; for Christianity would have died stifled, still-born, at the moment when He refused that call to go to Judæa and suffer.

How often we feel that we dare not do our duty because of some evil consequence which we fear will come upon us for so doing. It will be disadvantageous to our business. It will alienate our friends. It will end in disaster and perhaps ruin. But the teaching of this verse is that it may be possible for us to prolong our lives and safeguard our lower interests by shirking the higher call, but is it worth while? During the twelve appointed hours we have heavenly light to guide us. But if a man walk in the night—that is, if he ignobly shirks the straight path—he prolongs his existence—at a risk. We may purchase a few years of added life at far too great a spiritual cost.

¶ We recall the old story of Cranmer, who was induced on promise of life to sign a recantation of his Protestant faith. That was an attempt to purchase a thirteenth hour. But Cranmer discovered that the thirteenth hour was just black night unlit by any glimmer of the sunshine of God's face, so he recanted his recantation and accepted duty and death.

Thomas

John xi. 16.—'Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

THERE are many things for which we have to be thankful to St John's Gospel, and among other things we have to be thankful for its picture of Thomas. Nothing is told of Thomas in the Synoptic Gospels, except that he was one of the disciples, but the Fourth Gospel preserves for us three incidents in which Thomas figured pro-

minently, with the result that we have as vivid a mental picture of him as of any of the Twelve. In a sense we may say that the picture of Thomas is given to us in this sentence. From this remark of his we can gather quite well the manner of man he was. Indeed, the two other incidents which the Evangelist records do but fill in, and perhaps deepen, the lines of the picture given of him here.

1. What manner of man was Thomas, taking this sentence as our guide to his character? Well, first of all, he was a man of *great and unshrinking devotion*. The Christian Church has done less than justice to Thomas. It seems to have been Thomas's fate to be for ever identified with a nickname. He was called 'the Twin' in the first century. He has been called 'the Doubter' ever since. Of course, there is some justification for the nickname. He was the 'doubter' in his attitude toward the resurrection of Jesus. All the same, to call Thomas the 'doubter,' as if the sceptical mind was his chief characteristic, is not only not to do justice to him, it is to give us an absolutely distorted picture of him. For the chief thing in Thomas was not his doubt, but his great and unshrinking loyalty to his Lord.

It is this loyalty of his that shines forth in this incident. The other disciples were hesitating. The dangers of Judæa were frightening them. But Thomas never wavered in his mind. He had no shadow of doubt as to what he should do. If Jesus went back to Judæa he was going with Him. They say that when the Scottish people signed the Solemn League and Covenant in the troublous Stuart days, some of them signed their names with their blood, and added the words 'Until Death.' Well, when Thomas gave himself to the service of Christ, he gave himself absolutely, altogether, and for ever. When he enlisted amongst Christ's followers, it was with the mental resolve that he was His 'until death.' Like those knights in attendance upon the blind King John of Bohemia, who rode into the battle of Crécy with their bridles intertwined with that of their master, resolved to share his fate whatever it might be—so Thomas, come life, come death, was resolved never to forsake his Lord, bound as he was to Him by a bond of deep and enthusiastic love.

¶ For devotion and heroic love I know of no one to excel Thomas. 'As the Lord liveth,' said Elisha in answer to Elijah's appeal to him to leave him, 'as the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.' 'Entreat me not to leave thee,' said Ruth the Moabitess to Naomi her mother-in-law; 'whither thou goest I will go; where thou lodgest I will lodge; where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me and more also if aught but death part thee and me.' Those are moving and pathetic instances of loyalty, but they are not more moving and pathetic than the loyalty with which Thomas was ready to dare anything for his Master. 'Let us also go,' said this man of the devoted heart, 'that we may die with him.'[1]

Thomas loved Christ better than anyone or anything else in the world. He was prepared to hate his own life for that dear Lord's sake. And if in some respects Thomas is a warning to us, in this respect he is an example and a pattern. Thomas had the one thing needful, for he had a supreme love for Christ. In Watson Gilder's little poem there breathes the same spirit of devotion:

If Jesus Christ is a man,—
And only a man,—I say
That of all mankind I cleave to Him,
And to Him will I cleave alway.

If Jesus Christ is a God,—
And the only God,—I swear
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,
The earth, the sea, and the air.

2. But the other side of Thomas's nature is also revealed in this little incident—namely, his continual melancholy. 'If to say *man* is to say melancholy,' says Dr Alexander Whyte, 'then to say Thomas who is also called Didymus is to say *religious melancholy*.' That is profoundly true. There are some unhappy people who seem constitutionally unable to see the bright side of things. They cannot see the sun for spots. They cannot see the blue sky for clouds. They always see the difficulties, the drawbacks, the obstacles, the sorrows, the griefs, the losses. We all have to pass through the valley of Baca some time or other. But these good people seem never to get out of the valley of weeping. We all know such people. We knew them even in connection with the War—people who fastened

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Glorious Company of the Apostles*, 179.

their attention on all the gloomy portents and were quite blind to every encouraging sign, people of an essentially melancholy cast of mind. Thomas belonged to that depressed and rather depressing company.

¶ John Bunyan has drawn Thomas to the very life for us in his picture of Mr Fearing. This is what Greatheart says about him: 'He was a man of a choice spirit, only he was always kept very low, and that made his life so burdensome to himself, and so troublesome to others.' He went on to say that 'Mr Fearing was one that played upon the bass. He and his fellows sound the sackbut, whose notes are more doleful than the notes of other music are; though indeed,' Greatheart says, 'some say the bass is the ground of music. . . . Only here was the imperfection of Mr Fearing: he could play upon no other music but this, till towards his latter end.'

¶ 'The doubt of Thomas,' says Dr W. J. Dawson, 'is the despondence of a great spirit. It breathes like a gentle sigh through that other saying of his: "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?" He was, perhaps, one of those men through whose natures a vein of tender melancholy runs. Such men are like delicate musical instruments, the brilliance of whose tone suffers by the slightest change of temperature; they often suffer by the physical oppression of the robust, who little know how their unsympathetic brusqueness sets sensitive nerves jarring, and how their rough touch sets old bruises aching; their life moves in an orbit where transitions are rapid and frequent; they have their bright moments and their dark; they are of unequal temperament; they receive all impressions acutely because they are acutely sensitive; their joy is ecstasy, their suffering is agony, their disheartening is despair. Think of such men as Dr John Brown, the author of *Rab and His Friends*, in whom humour and melancholy lay so close together; of Charles Lamb, whose laughter is the foil to such unutterable despair; of Coleridge, with his gleams of celestial light breaking out of bitter darkness; of Johnson, with his sturdy faith ever struggling through the inertia and gloom of hypochondriac fancies; of Cowper, who can write with such delicate humour, such freshness of touch, such inspired faith and joy, and yet can die saying, "I feel unutterable despair." Think even of a man of action, and heroic action, like Abraham Lincoln, whose laughter was the relief of hereditary brooding melancholy, and was, as he said, "the vent," which saved him from a frenzied brain or broken heart. Such men may furnish us with a hint of what Thomas called Didymus may have been.'

Thomas was little inclined, Godet says, 'to subordinate the visible to the invisible.' That is to say, he had not that triumphant and exultant faith which in the deep midwinter can speak of the spring, and in the darkest night can be sure of the dawn, and in the day of reaction and defeat can be absolutely sure of victory. Thomas was apt to allow the facts that were nearest, the dark, disturbing, distressing facts of the immediate present, to absorb his thought and fill his entire horizon. The visible blotted out the invisible. The hostile Jews blotted out the thought of God. 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.' That was why Jesus said to him, in that wonderful interview after the Resurrection, 'Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.'

The Resurrection and the Life

John xi. 25, 26.—'Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.'

'Death,' 'life,' 'resurrection'—they are on the whole the most tremendous words in human speech. And they are all three in this sentence which Jesus spoke to Martha. They are the three things upon which men most eagerly crave light; and to know the truth about these things is in very deed to be set gloriously free.

When Jesus said to Martha, 'Thy brother shall rise again,' she answered, 'I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' The words indicate that to her the knowledge was poor comfort. The resurrection was so far away: between to-day and the last day so many to-morrows rolled their dreary length: what reality, what comfort was in the thought for those who wanted their loved ones now? And then came the great words which have pealed through the ages, weighty with the Divine power which so soon sets its seal upon them, gentle with the human sympathy which

meant them for healing to broken hearts: 'I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.'

1. Martha regarded the resurrection in the last day not necessarily as a spiritual fact or as one having a spiritual bearing, but as a mere matter of destiny like birth and death, a distant mysterious event. Christ draws it near, takes it out of time, vitalizes it, puts it into the category of faith, and connects it with Himself.

(1) '*I* am the resurrection.' For belief in some great future event, Jesus substitutes belief in His own person. 'He seeks to exchange adherence to a doctrinal truth,' says Godet, 'for confidence in Himself.' That was ever Christ's way. He offered Himself as the answer to men's questions and the final satisfaction of their needs. When the people of Galilee said, 'Ever more give us this bread,' He said to them, 'I am the bread.' When the people were torn and distracted by doubt, not knowing which way to turn, He offered Himself as their sufficient guidance, saying, 'I am the light of the world.' When Thomas complained that they really did not know the way to the Father He said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.' Not belief in a doctrine, but trust in a person, was what He asked. There is a wide difference between the two things. We can believe a doctrine, but we cannot trust it. We can grasp it with our minds, but it makes no appeal to our hearts. Like Martha we may believe in the Resurrection without believing in Him who is the Resurrection. This is a mistake we often make. Much of our Christian faith is assent to various propositions instead of trust in a personal Redeemer, who is Himself the substance and explanation of them all.

(2) 'I *am* the resurrection.' In turning Martha's attention to Himself, Jesus substitutes a present for a future object of trust. Martha can only think of that remote time when she and her brother will be reunited. Jesus says, 'I *am* the resurrection,' here and now. In Me the dead live. What our Lord wished Martha to understand was that at that very moment, though his body was in the tomb, Lazarus was alive because he was in touch with Himself.

The intention of our Lord was plainly to make an immediate comfort out of what is generally held to be a prospective joy. People commonly explain the passage still as belonging to a period which is yet to come. They understand it to mean that, when Christ shall appear again, there will be a resurrection, and that then the dead shall live. But is this all? Is this the first and chief meaning? No, Christ was decidedly and definitely leading the woman's mind away from what she felt would be to what then actually was. 'Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.'

(3) 'I am *the resurrection and the life*.' Our Lord does not content Himself with saying that He is the resurrection. He declares that He is 'the resurrection and the life.' As Westcott teaches us, 'the word "resurrection" comes first, because the teaching starts from death, but the special term is at once absorbed in the deeper word which includes it, "life."'

This idea of *life* is one of the dominating ideas of the Fourth Gospel. It leaps out in the very opening verses of the prologue. 'In him was life,' says John. It is the subject of great tracts of Christ's teaching. Life was, from one point of view, *the* gift He had come to bestow. With us life is derived; with Him it was original and natural. Christ was not a stream: He was a source. This life Christ has it in His power to bestow. He can give it because He possesses it. And the life which He gives is in quality like His own. 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.' There is no need to go into the ancient controversies about the strict meaning of the word 'eternal.' Let us quite freely admit that the word 'eternal' lays chief stress upon the quality of life rather than the quantity of it. It is a life to be measured, not by the ages of its continuance, but by its depth. It is the Divine life, Christ's own life in the soul.

The point to notice about this life is that it is beyond the reach of death. Death has as little to say to it as it has to the life of God Himself. The idea of immortality is contained and involved in the idea of life. That is why our Lord says here, 'I am the resurrection, and the life.' If He had given life to anybody, resurrec-

tion was simply bound to follow—a present, not a far-off resurrection, such as Martha thought of. What Jesus did by His act of calling Lazarus back to this earthly life again was not to call into new being a life which had ceased to be, but to reveal to Martha that, on the other side the grave, those whom we call dead are still alive.

¶ Dr Rendel Harris was once conducting a funeral in the city of Birmingham. He was bound by no set form of words. On the contrary, after the manner of the Quakers, he felt free to speak as the Spirit moved him. And in the course of the ceremony he said to the little group of mourners that were standing by, 'This cemetery is an empty place, the emptiest place in all Birmingham; there is no one in it.' [1]

It will not meet us where the shadows fall
  Beside the sea that bounds the Evening Land;
It will not greet us with its first clear call
  When Death has borne us to the farther strand.

It is not something yet to be revealed—
  The everlasting life—'tis here and now;
Passing unseen because our eyes are sealed
  With blindness for the pride upon our brow.

It dwells not in innumerable years;
  It is the breath of God in timeless things—
The strong, divine persistence that inheres
  In love's red pulses and in faith's white wings.[2]

2. In the next verse our Lord proceeds to apply this truth to the facts of human experience. He comes to treat of *death*. He looks at it in the light of the fact that He is the resurrection and the life, and it is not too much to say that He abolishes it. No, He has not taken away that death which is the mere dissolution of our earthly existence. But it has ceased to be the ugly, grisly thing men mean by death.

(1) 'He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.' That is what people said of Lazarus, that he was dead. But Lazarus believed in Christ; he was in vital union with Christ; the eternal life of Christ was in him. Therefore death could not really touch him. 'Though he were dead,' said Jesus, 'yet shall he live.' Our Lord, though perhaps He had the case of Lazarus specially in His mind, states the truth in general and universal form. That accounts for the future tense. 'He shall live' does not refer to some far-off time as if there was a long interval between the dying and the living. Life is put in the future because death is in the future too. The case is put hypothetically. We shall not be violating the meaning of the sentence by translating like this: 'He that believeth in me, though he die, yet shall he go on living.'

(2) 'And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.' In the first part of the sentence our Lord was thinking of the dead Lazarus. In this part He is thinking of those who loved Him and believed in Him who were still alive. In the first sentence He comforts us about our dead: they are not dead, He says, but alive. In the second He comforts us about ourselves who yet remain. 'You shall never die at all,' He says. And, once again, by that He does not mean that our physical life will not come to an end, that soul and body will not dissolve partnership. For those who believe in Christ, in common with those who do not believe in Him, there is a grave waiting somewhere. But we shall not die. The grave and long silence are not the finish. We have a life within us over which death exercises no power, and that life at death gets its chance. It blossoms out into something richer and fairer than anything this earth has ever witnessed. Life is our portion, not death. Even the physical act of dying is not dying in the terrifying and awful sense of the term. Death becomes 'ours,' as St Paul puts it, our friend, our possession. It is just the portal that admits us into eternal light and joy. But there is no cessation of being. Life flows on; only the stream becomes fuller and richer. 'He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die.'

There is no Death! What seems so is transition;
  This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life elysian,
  Whose portal we call Death.[1]

¶ The last words of Edward the Confessor were: 'Weep not, I shall not die, but live; and as I leave the land of the dying, I trust to

[1] F. Y. Leggatt.
[2] P. C. Ainsworth, *Poems and Sonnets*, 9.

[1] Longfellow.

see the blessings of the Lord in the land of the living.'

¶ If we Christians believe the smallest fraction of what we pretend to believe, there is but little to mourn over in death. I know not when or how that veiled messenger may come to me, but this I do know, that it can come only at the bidding of my Father. I know its mission can be nothing more than the unclothing of this poor weak body of my humiliation to clothe me with the body of His glory. . . . Death is not only an exodus, it is also an entrance; while we stand by the bedside and say, 'He is gone,' they on the other side are welcoming him with unspeakable joy.[1]

3. Is there freedom in this truth? What freedom does the knowledge of it give? How does it meet the requirements of human grief? It is separation that gives death its bitterness, but if the soul that has fled and the soul that remains are both united to Christ, there is no real separation; they meet in Him. It is the loneliness of the grave that makes us shrink from the thought of our loved ones being there, but if only we could bring ourselves to realize it, there can be no loneliness with the companionship of Christ, and He is the life to whom death makes no difference. Is the loved one taken away in the midst of his days? Then, though we know little of the activities of the next life, we can yet say that for all his powers, gifts, faculties, genius, there will be abundant scope. We somehow imagine that God has only this short life in which to make use of a man, and therefore we grieve if one is taken away in the height of his powers. God has eternity in which to use us. Has chance seemed to determine death, and has the loved one gone as by accident? God never works by chance, God works through everything. Thus, knowing the truth, we are set free. But still we weep; yes, and so does Christ the Resurrection and the Life. Through tears we cling to the truth. The freedom given is not freedom from grief, but it is the freedom of faith, and even through the dimness of tears we can discern the loving countenance of the Son of Man, the resurrection and the life, in whom the loved ones live, by whom we are still united to them, through whom we trust one day to see them again and speak with them face to face.

[1] *Quintin Hogg*, 308.

'Lord, Thou hast conquered death, we know;
Restore again to life,' I said,
'This one who died an hour ago.'
He smiled: 'She is not dead.'

'Yet our beloved seem so far,
The while we yearn to feel them near,
Albeit with Thee we trust they are.'
He smiled: 'And I am here.'

'Dear Lord, how shall we know that they
Still walk unseen with us and Thee,
Nor sleep, nor wander far away?'
He smiled: 'Abide in Me.'

Caiaphas

John xi. 49, 50.—'And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.'

Our Lord's great opponents throughout His ministry had been the Pharisees. They met Him at every turn, and strove to refute Him. But many of them were well affected to Him. One of them became a disciple; another laid His crucified body in his own tomb. Some of them may have thought it possible to win the brilliant young Rabbi of Nazareth to their ranks. The Pharisees alone would not have put Jesus to death. But the Sadducees, except in one instance, did not controvert with Jesus. They were the priestly party, and were to be found chiefly in Jerusalem. Their lives and interests centred in the Temple. When Christ crossed their path, when His growing influence threatened theirs, when His leadership became a peril to their predominance, and His popularity a danger to their safety, they did not parley with Him. They acted. 'They took counsel to put him to death,' and rested neither day nor night until He hung upon the Cross. It was the Sadducees who crucified Christ.

Now the leader of the Sadducees was Caiaphas. He was the High Priest that same—that fateful year. The high priesthood had been the petty gift of all the foreign rulers of Judæa, bestowing it as their pleasure or their passion prompted. Caiaphas held the office for the long period of eighteen years, from the year A.D. 18 to the year A.D. 36. It was this High Priest and leader of the Sadducees who was the chief agent in the crucifixion of Christ.

1. Caiaphas was a convinced and seriously religious man. Religion was the very business of his life. But religion in his mind was bound up with certain things, certain prospects, certain political ambitions—and anything which conflicted with those prospects and ambitions was bound to receive from Caiaphas the most determined opposition. Jesus came under the category of persons who were troublesome and dangerous. The cleansing of the Temple had been one of the first acts in the ministry of Jesus, and the words of rebuke, 'My house shall be called an house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves,' had neither been forgotten nor forgiven. But that had been the act of One who was then regarded as an obscure zealot. It was prudent not to make too much of it, and of Him. But now He had risen to prominence, His journeys had become popular progresses, His miracles had roused the wonder and His teaching had secured the faith and reverence of the people, and instant steps must be taken. Caiaphas saw in a flash that the watchful Roman governor would be only too glad to see in this popular clamour around Christ an outbreak of insurrection, and to sweep away the Temple and its priesthood because unable to keep the peace.

The chief priests and the rulers hastily came together in the house of Caiaphas to consider what was to be done. They were quite at a loss. It was Caiaphas who dropped the first suggestion of dealing with Jesus as they came to deal with Him. To Caiaphas belongs the terrible distinction of having first suggested the death of Christ. And more than that, it was Caiaphas who wrapped up the suggestion in a form of words which enabled men to act upon it, with the feeling not that they were indulging their own passions, but with the feeling that they were carrying out a great moral principle.

It is true that again and again it is expedient that one man die for the people. It is true that again and again an innocent person has to suffer in order that society may be awakened to some enormity in its habitual life. It is perhaps true that over a million men on the threshold of life had to be killed, and a million homes submerged in grief, if Europe as a moral entity was to survive. It is true that often a ship has to go down at sea before that place of peril is marked upon a chart. But such a law would never be held as justifying us in bringing suffering upon the innocent. 'It must needs be,' said our Lord, 'that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.'

It is a sin which we may fall very readily into in our day, the sin of quoting an admirable phrase, something which is true in science or in law, or as a general political maxim, or even as a spiritual principle, in justification of some particular action or line of action which *for us* is wrong and nothing but wrong.

¶ Caiaphas was only able to find his justification in a proverb, but we generally can find something in the Bible. 'The poor always ye have with you.' 'In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.' How much selfish inaction has been justified by the first, and dogmatic assertion about another world by the second? 'Not slothful in business'—how much devotion to money-making has been justified by that? 'Only my widow's mite!'—how much penurious giving has been covered by that? [1]

There are words which are true in the sense that, given certain things, others follow by inevitable consequence. That, however, does not justify *us* in supplying one of the evil conditions in order that society or the universe may painfully right itself. It is never right to do wrong knowingly. To do evil in order that good may follow, is a maxim which scrupulous people will do well to keep clear of. But to do evil in order that our own interests may be promoted—there, there is no question, no room for casuistry. That is only base. And that was the course which Caiaphas recommended—to kill Christ and thus secure the reputation of being friendly to the Roman power and opposed to popular uprisings. That was the course which Caiaphas recommended, wrapping it up in a moral platitude which he knew to be in the circumstances only a platitude, but which served the purpose, helping men to deceive themselves who were wishing to deceive themselves.

2. We must never allow ourselves to forget that it was the religious people of His day who crucified Christ. Judas played into their hands; Pilate was weak, when he should have stood firm against them; Herod took a negative part in it all; but the men who pushed it on, the men who stirred up the mob to shout for His blood, were the men who went to their syna-

[1] A. F. W. Ingram, *Men Who Crucify Christ*, 46.

gogues, who studied their sacred books, who said their prayers; and the man who headed them, who stiffened the weak, hardened the fearful, and browbeat the waverers, was the man who had been through a thousand Temple services, who had offered the holy sacrifice times without number, and, amid clouds of solemn incense, had gone within the veil to make atonement for the people.

There is not a doubt that the most cruel things that have been done in this world have been done in the name of religion. And yet that in itself is no disparagement of religion. It is only a reason why we should see to it that our religion is true, is a religion of holiness and kindness and forgiveness. The reason why religion when it is sincere and passionate leads often to terrible strife and the shedding of blood, is that religion is as deep and precious as life. It is as foolish to say that religion is brought into contempt because religious people have striven violently for what they held to be vital, as it would be to say that because people everywhere cling to life, and in defence of their own life will even strike death into their enemies, therefore life itself is an evil thing, and the instinct to live a merely barbarous instinct, no longer to be justified in wise men.

It is true that there are no quarrels so bitter, no animosities so profound and insatiable, as those that concern religion. But the conclusion is, not that therefore religion is a bane in human life, but that religion is a matter of such potentiality, of such deep and elementary power either to build up or to cast down, that the human race will never be right, will never have a basis for an abiding brotherhood, and the nations for a bond and ground of peace, until the human race is right there, and at *one* there.

The lessons to be drawn from the disquieting fact that they were religious men who put Jesus to death are lessons which we may apply to ourselves in secret.

For one thing, there are religions and religions. A man may be a very religious man and a very bad man at the same time—for his religion may be a bad religion. And his religion is a bad religion if it justifies him remaining a bad man. If, whilst still considering himself religious, a man may still be a hard man, unforgiving, suspicious, morose, taking his pound of flesh at any cost—such a man may be a religious man, but his religion is a false religion; his is the religion which Caiaphas represented, the religion which crucified Jesus.

The question for us to ask ourselves is not, Are we religious men? We have all a religion—the result within us of birth, early training, environment, teaching, circumstances, moral events in our own life and our attitude towards those events. The question for us to ask ourselves is, How do we stand towards the man Christ Jesus? How is the spirit of our life related to His Spirit? To what depth are His purpose and point of view our purpose and point of view? Has our life on the whole His accent? These are the searching questions, the questions which pierce our personality to the roots. Let us not comfort ourselves by declaring that we are men of religion: for our religion may be our particular form of self-indulgence. Let us see whether we can say, however timidly, 'Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.'

¶ What makes a man a Christian is neither his intellectual acceptance of certain ideas nor his conformity to a certain rule, but his possession of a certain Spirit and his participation in a certain Life.[1]

Love's Offering

John xii. 3.—'Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair.'

Jesus had arrived at Bethany six days before the Passover—that is, on a Friday. The day after was the Sabbath, and 'they make him a supper.' It was the special festive meal of the Sabbath. The words of St John seem to indicate that the meal was a public one, as if the people of Bethany had combined to do Him this honour, and so share the privilege of attending the feast. In point of fact, we know from St Matthew and St Mark that it took place 'in the house of Simon the leper'—not, of course, an actual leper, but one who had been such. Any gathering of Jesus' friends in Bethany must have been incomplete without Lazarus and his sisters. Each is present, and each contributes an appropriate addition to the feast. Martha serves; Lazarus, mute as he has been throughout the whole story, bears

[1] John Baillie, *The Roots of Religion in the Human Soul*, 203.

witness by his presence as a living guest to the glory of Jesus, while Mary makes the day memorable by a characteristic act of devotion. Under some great impulse of love, she brings forth her precious box of ointment, and pours it upon the feet of her Lord.

¶ In Browning's *One Word More*, addressed to his wife, he compares himself to the artist Rafael, who tried, in poetry, to utter the love that filled his heart. Browning wishes that he, too, could express his love more fully by some other art than his own, since his poetry did not, and could not, tell it all. It was in some such way Mary felt when she broke her alabaster box of ointment at the feet of her Lord. Speech was not enough. When in an abandonment of gratitude she poured out all the contents of her precious casket, she was trying in her own way to say the One Word More which cannot be spoken, but which Love has been trying to speak since ever the world began.

Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,
  Nor other thought her mind admits
  But, he was dead, and there he sits,
And he that brought him back is there.

Then one deep love doth supersede
  All other, when her ardent gaze
  Roves from the living brother's face,
And rests upon the Life indeed.

All subtle thought, all curious fears,
  Borne down by gladness so complete,
  She bows, she bathes the Saviour's feet
With costly spikenard and with tears.

The story provides two points of view from which we may regard it.

1. *The Critics and their Disapproval.*—'Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?' No act, however lovely, wins the approval of all. Man is slow to admire. And the disciples, stirred on by Judas, said grudgingly, 'What is the use of this waste?' The nard was very costly; its price could have assisted hundreds of poor families. Why should all that have been wasted at the whim of an unthinking, emotional woman, and not have been used in almsgiving which is dear to God?

Their mistake was in taking too narrow a view of Mary's act. They were in the common bondage to utilitarianism. How often the ready criticism blinds men's eyes to a heavenly thing before them. Charity, benevolence, almsgiving are all good: the world can see at a glance the immediate benefits they bring. But the greater things in life, love which soars away beyond the necessities of the hour, the glad devotion of a heart taken captive by goodness, all the high self-forgetting, self-squandering of generosity—these are in another world altogether; diviner things on which rest the spirit of glory and of God, and which kindle in all those who see them an uplifting sense that we are made for something better than this mere earthly existence.

The criticism of Judas is still a common criticism. Men ask why money should be wasted on beautiful churches while our cities are disgraced by slums; why we should squander thousands on statues to commemorate dead heroes and statesmen and poets while hospitals are needing funds and widows and orphans are uncared for. And the answer is—because we do not live by bread alone. We need beauty in the public places of the city; we need art, all the fair creations of man's imaginative powers, to give us a richer inward life than the hunt after the possession of things can ever yield: we need all the visible symbols in Church and State which proclaim that the higher values in life are the spiritual values.

¶ 'The most sensual and the meanest always manifest,' says Mark Rutherford, 'an indisposition to be content with mere material satisfactions. It is the commentary on the text that man shall not live by bread alone. It is evidence of a compulsion, of which art is the highest manifestation, to escape.'

2. *Our Lord's Approval.*—(1) When Aristotle passed in review our human virtues to discover the highest and best of them, he declared that our highest man is the magnanimous man, the royal-hearted man who takes counsel only with his heart and gives liberally. Mary of Bethany acted in that fashion. She wished to give, to express her utter devotion to Jesus, and so she took her most valued and costly possession and poured it on His feet. She was most royally lavish. But there is one point wherein she differs from the man of the philosopher's admiration. The magnanimous man, says

Aristotle, gives largely because to do less would be unworthy of himself. His personal dignity, his own self-respect, his spacious-mindedness demand that he should not niggle in his giving, or narrowly count the cost. That is a lofty conception, and the world would be a fairer place and much pleasanter to dwell in were men and women built after this fashion. But Mary never thought of what was worthy of herself: she forgot herself altogether in the thought of Jesus, whose words revealed to her the captivating vision of a new life rich with a wondrous hope and radiant with a glory not of earth. Is not that a far better thing, a lovelier act and spirit undimmed by any shadow of self? Humility can reach a height of nobility, a perfection of beauty, for ever denied to self-respect or pride.

The disciples criticized her as though the poor were the losers by her extravagance. Nothing is blinder than a narrow utilitarianism. The heart has its instincts, and these are wiser than the thinkings of narrow souls. The children of love are ever justified in what they do. For the well at which the poor and the unfortunate drink is love: the instincts of the generous are their bread. Show the world the beauty of unselfishness and the vulgarity and meanness of the grasping spirit and you will do more to better social conditions than all the labours of the politicians. Kindle admiration and love for the Christ who taught us the true goodness, and you will bring help to the doors of more poor and wretched ones than if you gave all your goods for charity.

(2) But our Lord's defence of Mary is of wider range. 'Let her alone,' He says; 'against the day of my burying hath she kept this.' What did our Lord mean? Why was Mary led at this time to anoint Jesus with her precious ointment?

Those were the days of darkness. The cause of Jesus was failing. And He was going up to Jerusalem to keep the Feast in the midst of His enemies. The disciples were still dreaming of glory, but even they could see the clouds lowering heavily enough. Would not that give the keynote to our Lord's talk that Sabbath evening? For Jesus lived in the hour and His speech came straight out of the immediate circumstances. We know from the Gospels that at this time His teaching took a sombre note. All the parables of this last week are parables of judgment. His talk in Bethany that night—would it not flow from deep brooding over Israel's coming rejection of Him and the far-off good which would come from His sacrifice? He would remind the little company of sympathizing friends of those profound thoughts of the ancient prophets as they pondered over the people's rejection of God's word in their day: how the saints were called upon to suffer for the nation's disloyalty, and how through their sorrow a new and better day was born. The Cross of Jesus is not a strange solitary phenomenon in the world's history. It is in consonance with the age-long struggle between good and evil and its shadow lies far back in the pages of the prophets. And Jesus, who found wisdom and hope and strength in them for His own battles, would try to bring the like help and illumination to His friends in Bethany. He would show them the spirit of glory and of God resting upon such a page as the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah.

Our Lord had sought to prepare His disciples for the coming trial, but they were too expectant of glory really to listen. Mary heard: she could not tell all He meant, but she knew well that He was surrounded by enemies. The words of suffering and death echoed through all the chambers of her soul. If He be in danger, then now is the time to declare her adoration and her faith. And so that quiet Sabbath evening, while He is resting in Bethany before going up to Jerusalem, the city polluted with the blood of so many saints, she brings her one precious possession and pours it on the feet of her Lord.

This act of Mary, we see then, was that finest of all the virtues, loyalty in the hour of danger, devotion and utter assurance of faith in the face of defeat.

> He that can endure
> To follow with allegiance a fall'n lord,
> Does conquer him that did his master conquer,
> And earns a place i' the story.

A beautiful act has an immortality of influence. Useful acts serve the moment, but they die in an hour. But if we will demand from life's beautiful and more excellent inspirations some immediate service and utility, think of this direct result of Mary's act. It gave joy to Christ Jesus when His day was dark: it was a

cup of refreshing put to His lips when He was fainting under the world's opposition and hatred. Love and loyalty and all the rare fine qualities of the soul are their own splendid justification: their glory is in themselves. But if this act of Mary helped the Saviour of the world in His great hour, is there in earth's most utilitarian acts any profit which can for a moment be put in comparison therewith?

Let her alone: the house is filled
With perfume sweet and rare;
For fragrant are the deeds of love,
Pervading everywhere.
And fragrant to the Saviour's heart,
How fragrant who shall guess?
The labour that the world esteems
A labour of excess.

The Odour of the Ointment

John xii. 3.—'The house was filled with the odour of the ointment.'

In this sentence we have hidden the secret of all winsome influence. This gracious act of Mary's, in its golden frame of Christ's acceptance and praise, is like a mirror in which we can see and compare the manner of our living and our loving.

1. *The Explanation of the Widespread Fragrance.*—The explanation lay, we can see at once, in the fact that the box was broken, and *all* the contents spilled out. If Mary had done what the disciples would have liked her to do, she would have carefully poured out just enough to serve for the anointing. She would not have broken the box, but only shaken out what was required, and kept the rest for some other time. And Christ would have been anointed just the same, and the balance might even have been given to the poor, but—the fragrance would not have filled the whole house.

There are lives that we know just like that. They perform all their social and religious duties with faithfulness and precision. What their standards require of them, they do, always. They are solid and useful members of society. But somehow, when the broken-hearted wander forth in search of sympathy, it is not to them that they go, Men or women who have failed or fallen are warned by a sort of instinct to pass them by. The very children know better than to play much about their doorsteps—know by the same instinct that takes the bees past the grasses and the corn on to the heather and the flowers. For what these lives want is just fragrance, the power to charm and to attract.

And we know other characters, in many ways imperfect, it may be, that touch us with an irresistible charm. They are perfect havens of refuge for the storm-tossed. They helped a wanderer yesterday, and he turned out to be a fraud, but they will open their hearts to another to-morrow. They are for ever 'giving themselves away.' They are always to be found 'walking on the second mile.' And their lives are fragrant. For the secret of fragrance is just self-forgetfulness, and the power that casts out self is love. Whose is the most fragrant life in all the world—the life that draws the weary and the heavy-laden, and is a refuge for the tempted and the fallen? His who, in utter self-forgetfulness and sacrifice, broke the pure casket of His sinless heart, and poured upon the world all the love and passion which it held.

¶ George Adam Smith, in writing *The Life of Henry Drummond*, said that he was attempting the impossible thing, for to endeavour to write the story of such a life was like attempting 'to write the history of a fragrance.' It was true. There was a spiritual atmosphere, an influence proceeding from Drummond's life analogous to the fragrance of flowers. To be in his presence was to be helped and purified.

A woman, whose husband was dying, came late one night to Henry Drummond's house and asked him to come to her home. 'My husband is deein', sir,' she said. 'He is no able to speak wi' you, and he is no able to hear you; but I would like him to ha' a breath o' you about him afore he dees.'

2. *The Service of the Widespread Fragrance.*—Mary's act was meant for Jesus only. The love and gratitude of which it spoke were for her Master and Friend alone. But she could not prevent the odour of it stealing all over the room, and refreshing the disciples also with its gracious influence. She ministered to more than the Christ.

That is always true of acts like Mary's. Never a man or a woman yet came with their offering of sacrifice, or testimony, or service to

Jesus Christ and for His love's sake poured all out at His feet, but the sweet savour and influence of it reached all those who were near. We have seen a brother bowed down with a sudden blow take up his cross humbly, and return with a brave heart to his labours again, in hopefulness and faith unfeigned. We have heard the mourner steady her voice to ask through her tears how some ailing neighbour did. And though we knew that the brave front and the self-forgetting were gifts to Christ, for His own sake, yet into our hearts also the fragrance of these offerings stole, to linger like a breath from heaven for many a day. It is one of the laws of God that you can never deprive a loving deed or a Christ-like act of its fragrance.

3. *The Test of the Widespread Fragrance.*—When Mary broke her precious box at the feet of Christ, not only did the scent pervade the upper room—'it filled the whole house,' says John. Because there was the spirit of consecration in that upper and inner chamber, the influence of it was felt in the common rooms and workplaces downstairs. It was natural, it was what you might have expected. You might call it, from its very naturalness, a test.

How shall we know, how can the world judge of the homage and worship which a man offers to Christ in the inner chamber of his heart? Is it enough that he counts himself, and professes to be, among those who give Him honour there? It is not enough. There should be outward tokens. The influence of his offering of himself to Christ in the temple of his heart should fill his whole life. The fragrance of his prayer and fellowship and thankfulness should be felt down even on the common daily levels of his life, in the places where he earns his bread and plies his calling and meets and deals with his fellow-men. He should be a different man on the street and in the market-place because he loves the Christ and worships Him in the sanctuary of his heart. It is for this that the world looks and watches, and has a right to look and watch. For, as it was written of Christ Himself that 'He could not be hid,' so may it be affirmed of all real heart homage to Christ. That cannot be hidden either. The odour of it, as of ointment poured forth, must reach down even to the counter and the office and the living-rooms of home. That is the ultimate test and the hardest test of our religion.

¶ I do not know that the one-time popular gibe against the woman preacher, that she should go home and mind her children, was ever spoken against Catherine Booth, but in any case it would have fallen ridiculously flat. She began her public ministry when I, her eldest child, was five years old. But her own home was never neglected for what some would call—I doubt whether she would have so described it—the larger sphere. Both alike had been opened to her by her God. She saw His purposes in both. In the humble duties of the kitchen table, her hands busy with the food, or in the nursery when the children were going to bed, or at the bedside of a sick child, she was working for God's glory.[1]

Poverty

John xii. 8.—'The poor ye have always with you' (R.V.).

1. Our Lord understood the word 'poor' better than many of us do. For Him it meant not an abstract idea, but a lifelong experience. To be born in a manger, and brought up in a cottage, to earn His bread at a labourer's bench, to choose workmen for His familiar friends, to wander without home or shelter, to borrow His very grave at last—this was the life which He chose, He who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor. And even in His acceptance of the spikenard Christ identifies Himself with man's low estate. It might have been sold and given to the poor. 'The poor?' He seems to say, 'I am the Poor.' He claims in His own Person to be the image and representative of all human need and hardship—just as He felt in Himself the anguish and bore the sin of the whole world. How calmly He said it: 'The poor ye have always with you.' Yet even as He spoke He must have realized those multitudes for whom existence is one 'long doing-without, more or less patiently'; He must have seen the vast armies of poverty 'passing in sad procession from the cradle to the grave.' Surely He saw also moral and spiritual compensations which are hidden from us. He who knew what is in man regarded wealth, not want, as one main hindrance and drawback to

[1] Bramwell Booth, *These Fifty Years*, 25.

the soul. He looked upon the state of the humble as actually a privilege in disguise.

¶ I remember hearing of a man and his wife who kept a little shop in a little town. Life was a hard struggle, and often the way seemed impossible. At such times man and wife would sink on their knees together in the shabby little parlour behind the shop and lay the matter before God. In spite of the hardness of the struggle life was rich in the fellowship and joy of true love and a real home. The business prospered, and at last they moved to a bigger shop in a large town. Then branches were opened in other centres, and the husband had to be often away from home. Business had to be attended to, and husband and wife saw each other but seldom, and never now prayed together — there was never any time — and although the wife had more to spend than ever in her life before, the real joy of life had fled. She had gained a fortune and lost her husband, and both suffered in their life with God.[1]

2. Our Lord treats the existence of this grim fact, not as a problem, but as an appeal. He assumes and implies that poverty, as such, has a claim for spikenard. And *spikenard we have always with us.* We all possess something costly to communicate, we all have something precious that is worth giving away. Mere money is generally the cheapest of gifts, and the least useful. The poor who have the chief claim on us to-day are not perhaps the destitute; they are the stupid, the ignorant, the weak, the lazy, the coarse, the sensual, the unstable, the forlorn —those folk whom we class concisely as 'inferiors.' Multitudes of them would be unhappy if they were transported into an earthly paradise to-morrow. But so much the more does their moral poverty plead for our sympathy and our devotion. In so far as we feel ourselves richer than they—richer in faith and affection, in energy and patience and self-control—they call for our spikenard. And each of them stands to us in the place of Christ Himself. Though they be idle or dissolute or undeserving, this is the very measure of their claim. Him we have not always; but we have always those with whom He has made Himself one, with whom He bids us deal as though they were He. Our gifts carry virtue only in so far as they are fragrant with the spikenard of the heart.

[1] A. D. Belden.

¶ Thinkers of the most different schools and sects would probably agree that true charity demands of us money, but also something more than money: personal service, sacrifice of time and thought.[1]

¶ Agnes Repplier has recently published a book on the life of Mère Marie of the Ursulines. It states that the secret of Mère Marie's influence is to be found in the fact that when she saw the poor and needy 'she approached them with respect as living representatives of Christ.'

Look you to serve Me but above?
  Nay, rather serve Me here below;
Would you on Me heap out your love?
  On want and sin your love bestow;
Have I not said it? What you do
  To these, My poor, ye do to Me;
Whatever here I take from you
  Sevenfold returned to you shall be.
Doubt not if I am here; with eyes
  Of mercy know Me, wan and pale.
What! hear you not my anguished cries,
  My moans and sighs that never fail![2]

3. The conventional marriage of religion and respectability was never made in heaven. Mediæval artists loved to paint a very different bridal—the marriage of Francis and Poverty. The men who gazed at that fantastic picture felt that it expressed in a parable the very genius of the gospel. And it is repeated as often as gifted men and women quietly forgo their position and forget their pleasures, that they may claim kinship with the disinherited and pour out their spikenard on the travel-stained feet of the poor. The aroma of such devotion puts new meaning into our hollow phrases. It proves how that very poverty which seems to impeach our faith in God's mercy can serve to strengthen and confirm it. For the gospel remains vague and theoretical to every man who does not lay hold of the mighty truth at its heart—the truth of the redeeming sacrifice of love. It reveals its secret to the man who is overwhelmed by a sense of the evils and sorrows of his race, and who grasps its Divine power to succour and to save his fellows. Christian faith flickers and dies away in the breast of the student, the dreamer, the religious sentimentalist. It flames up in

[1] Sir Leslie Stephen, *Practical Ethics.*
[2] W. C. Bennett.

the heart of the man who spends himself in patient fidelity to needy and unstable souls. There is a blessing even in the dreadful fact of poverty, when it pierces us and makes us real.

Lead me, yea, lead me deeper into life,
This suffering, human life wherein Thou liv'st
And breathest still, and hold'st Thy way divine.
'Tis here, O pitying Christ, where Thee I seek,
Here where the strife is fiercest; where the sun
Beats down upon the highway thronged with men,
And in the raging mart, O! deeper lead
My soul into the living world of souls
Where Thou dost move.[1]

There were Certain Greeks

John xii. 20, 21.—'And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.'

1. The Passover was at hand, and the curtain was about to rise on the final act in the drama of the life of our Lord. Along the dusty roads of Palestine the caravans and companies of pilgrims were wending their way towards the Holy City in anticipation of the Feast. 'And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast.' They were Greeks by birth, but they had moved on from Greek religion. We may assume that they were men of earnest and speculative mind who, having found no spiritual satisfaction in the paganism of their own nation, nor yet in the lofty philosophy of its best and clearest thinkers, had turned to the Jewish faith for that which they had failed to find elsewhere. They were adherents of Judaism, and as such they had come up to the capital for the yearly festival, obedient to the best they had yet discovered. That is the first and the most promising feature about this group of men. For the step they had already taken must have cost them much. To the Greeks all other peoples were barbarians, outsiders. Only a deep seriousness of mind could have induced these men to take such a forward step in their quest for God.

¶ Browning tells us of a cultured Greek poet, Cleon, who wrote to remonstrate with his ruler for having actually proposed to look at St Paul's creed. The idea of treating such a creed with any attention! Cleon is amazed and scornful. What! he asks,

> Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,
> . . . . .
> Hath access to a secret shut from us?
> Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,
> In stooping to inquire of such an one,
> . . . . .
> Their doctrine could be held by no sane man.

Too often we begin to applaud the men at the point of their interest in Jesus. But what carried them into this quest was an earlier spirit which is of signal importance for human life. The love of truth, the passion for reality, is a rare endowment. It is the mark of sheer honesty and courage. 'Next to faith in Christ crucified and risen,' says Dr Hort, 'the unfaltering faith in truth is perhaps the power in man on which the future of human welfare most depends.' And it is a power which we have to cherish and exercise with care, for it makes such demands upon us that we are apt, unless the will is braced, to rest content with half-truths or illusions or prejudices, simply because they are more comfortable.

These Greeks had a nobler spirit. They were already seekers after God, true to the light they had received, and therefore ready for fresh light. As they journeyed they naturally had heard the gossip which centred round the young Teacher from Nazareth, who for three years had become increasingly a storm-centre of controversy. Scraps of what He had been saying reached their ears. Parables of His, strangely arresting and provocative, were retold to them. They heard of His mysterious power of healing, His claim to forgive sins, His assertion that He himself was the way, the truth, and the life, His astounding audacity in having dared to supersede the very laws of Moses. The reported sayings of this remarkable Galilean awakened answering echoes in their searching souls. They talked, argued, discussed Him among themselves, what He had said, what He had done, how He had shed a new and fuller light on the law and the prophets. But, then, had He? Was it a new light after all?

To men of their temperament all this was interesting. Nay, more, it was disquieting. Could it be that the faith of Israel was not so

[1] R. W. Gilder.

sufficient as they had thought? Had the last word really been said concerning the things of God, and was there no more to hear, no more to learn? At any rate, as they thought about it all they became more and more obsessed by the longing to seek out and see for themselves the Galilean and His friends. The amazing scenes of which they heard when they reached Jerusalem, Jesus Himself having shortly before entered the city gates amid the hosannas of the populace, drove them to action. And finding Philip, whom from his birthplace—a district largely Hellenic in population—we may assume to have been familiar with their language, they said unto him, 'Sir, we would see Jesus.'

In going to Philip they went to the right person, for Philip was accustomed to deal with such natures. At the very beginning of his discipleship he had been met by Nathanael's sceptical inquiry, 'Can any good thing come out of Galilee?' to which he had the sense to reply, 'Well, come and see.' Come to Jesus and see for yourself. Which Nathanael did, and his prejudice vanished. These Greeks had surmounted long ago the difficulty felt by Nathanael, for they were open-minded. But Philip knew that their need was no mere disciple's testimony about the Lord. They had to be put into touch with Jesus Himself.

Our faith is mediated for us through the Church. Had it not been for the testimony of 'the glorious company of the apostles' and their successors, the truth of Christ would not have reached us. Still, our faith passes beyond the testimony to the Truth Himself. Christ may be misrepresented even by those who sincerely desire to serve Him. There is nothing like direct experience for clearing up difficulties and removing misconceptions. We need the Church and its witness in order to come into touch with the Lord; anyone who denies that or decries it is in error. But it is not enough to rest content with what the Church says, for the spirit of the Lord is deeper than the testimony of His followers at any epoch.

What became of these Greek inquirers? We are not told. The Evangelist merely mentions their inquiry in order to describe the effect it had upon our Lord. What effect the interview had upon them, the gospel never tells, but it is unlikely that such fine natures would fail to understand and own the Lord. In the light of their record we feel certain that, as they pass beyond our information, they move along the line upward to the centre of things.

2. Two truths shine for us from this story. There is, first, *the need of overcoming our prejudices*; and, second, *the risk of ignoring Christ*.

(1) To know and serve God we require to overcome our prejudices as well as our passions. Now, while passions are rebellious, at least we are on our guard against them, if we have any sense or seriousness at all. Passions advertise themselves; whereas prejudices are subtle generally. 'We all decry prejudice,' as Herbert Spencer puts it, 'yet are all prejudiced.' For prejudices work upon us secretly and silently, so that we are almost unconscious of their force. Often they are part and parcel of our world, consecrated, it may be, by long associations, supported by influences and interests of our circle. And, even when we become aware of them, it requires a real effort to rise above them. For example, many of us fail just because we do not realize that we are prejudiced against a deeper faith in God, a faith that would carry us beyond the limitations of conduct and opinion in which we are living. The Lord is not all He could be and would be to us, because we will not have the courage to break through some conventional restriction or opinion.

¶ 'I think,' wrote Mrs Fry once to her niece, 'we are all tempted to take up a half-way house in the religious life, to say, "Thus far will I go and no farther"; but I believe that it is by making no restrictions that we may be brought at last into the glorious liberty, rest, and peace of the children of God.'

What we see in anyone depends largely upon what we ourselves are and upon what we desire. Insight is determined by interests and instincts. That is why so many different opinions are held about Jesus. He is seen, and some see everything in Him, some nothing at all, others very little. The reason lies not in Him, but in the fact that our concerns and interests are so various and casual, sometimes so different from His. Above all, we only come into direct touch with Jesus as we are bent upon the truth of God, the truth about ourselves, whatever that may cost us. There is no vision of Him for the easy-going or for those who will not allow their pride and prejudice to be disturbed by His claims.

(2) Again, these Greeks had the instinctive

sense that it was risky to leave Jesus out of account. The Pharisees loudly declared that He should be ignored. And there are always people who insist, with the prestige of learning and authority, that we can have a quite satisfactory religion apart from Christ. Such voices are sometimes impressive and plausible. But they are to be distrusted. Christ has something to give us in our search for God which no one else can give; that is putting it in the lowest terms possible. These Greeks had no definite belief as yet about Jesus; they did not know enough to call Him Lord or Son of God, so rudimentary was their faith; but the point is that they felt vaguely that they must take account of Him before they made up their minds about religion. No speculations or traditions were sufficient. Some instinct drove them past any form of faith and truth that tried to go on by ignoring Christ. And in our modern lives there must be something corresponding to this feeling.

¶ In a recent English novel there is the account of a father and son, who went out one day to bury a favourite dog in the garden. 'Strange life a dog's,' said the father suddenly, as he leaned upon his spade, 'the only footer with rudiments of altruism and a sense of God.' Then the lad, a university undergraduate, asked, 'Do you believe in God, dad? I've never known.' The father had to make some answer to this straight question, and tried to define his terms. 'What do you mean by God? There are two irreconcilable ideas of God. There's the unknowable creative principle—one believes in that. And there's the sum of altruism in man—naturally one believes in that.' 'I see,' said the lad, 'that leaves out Christ, doesn't it?' Of course it did. So the father asked him what he thought. The son's reply was: 'Of course, my first year we talked a good bit about that sort of thing. But in the second year one gives it up—I don't know why—it's awfully interesting.'

There are modern theories of life and the world which wrap up things in words of high sound, and yet ignore Christ. They may not be antagonistic to Him. They may ignore Him as superfluous in their scheme of idealistic philosophy or ethics, ignore Him respectfully and decorously as a well-meaning oriental genius of the far past, who at best is to be ranked with Socrates and Buddha. Or they may deny openly the authority of Christ, as is being done in many quarters at present, proclaiming an ethical programme which runs clean counter to His purity. Their logic it may be hard to meet. Their arguments and appeals it may be difficult to resist. But it is no obscurantism at this time of day for us to suspect instinctively any scheme of things which has no place for Jesus Christ, and any explanation of the world and God which does not need His Spirit and revelation.

No, like these Greeks, we are not to be put off. We are not going to make up our minds about religion before we take Him into account. For in seeing Him, in direct touch with Him, in realizing what He means and all He is to us—thus, and thus only, can we see the Father and be satisfied.

The Universal Quest

John xii. 21.—'We would see Jesus.'

On several occasions during the earthly ministry of Jesus we find Him coming into touch with representatives of the world beyond the boundaries of Judaism. But among the incidents in the Gospels which suggest a larger mission than a ministry to Israel alone stands out pre-eminently St John's story of the Greeks who came up to the feast at Jerusalem with an earnest desire to see Him. Whatever their intention, their coming kindled in the mind of Christ a vision of universal human desire, and of Himself as the answer to it, which explains the mingled agony and rapture of His wonderful prophecy of His Passion and the attraction by which He would draw all men to Himself.

With hearts athirst for Wisdom they had turned
From native streams to where, on Zion's Hill,
A sacred fountain flowed; but thirsting still
They came to Jesus. . . . And what time they learned
The Way His feet would take, and zealous burned
To follow in that Way, the Master's will,
Storm-toss'd so long, was strengthened to fulfil
The course ordained. With joy He now discerned
The first glad signs the harvest would be worth
The pain and loss of seed-time. He must die,

As dies the corn of wheat in giving birth
To larger life: the harvest by and by
Would well repay the Sower faring forth
To sow the bitter field of Calvary.

Was Christ right, or was this but His dream? Is there, as a fact, in the hearts of men this desire to see Him? What is the answer of experience? It is that the desire to see Jesus is as real now and as universal as He saw and foresaw it to be then. Christ is still provoking that quest and responding to it. He is a challenge, a centre of disturbance, a power as great in our own day as in the first age of the Church. And therefore the cry of the twentieth century is inevitably the cry of these Greeks: 'We would see Jesus.'

1. 'We would see Jesus.' It is the cry alike of the saint of ripe experience and of the beginner in the spiritual life who only dimly knows that Christ is the source and giver of life eternal. It is the cry of the broken man who has travelled into the far country and longs to return to God. It is the cry of the puzzled man who feels that Christ is fading from him. It is the cry of the hopeful man who is beginning to see all that Christ will be to him when he finds Him more fully. And this desire for Christ, so conscious and clear to itself, which knows what it wants and in its own fashion sets out to seek it, is not the only way in which the quest of St John's Greeks is to be traced still among us. 'We would see Jesus' is the unconscious cry of all lives, whatever quest they are bent upon, and travelling along whatever road of thought and endeavour and purpose and aspiration. The successful man of business standing at the summit of ambition knows that there is a void in his soul which no prize of wealth or position can fill and satisfy. The thinker exploring the secrets of truth is growingly conscious that he has not discovered the key to unlock the hidden mysteries. The artist, in his struggle to reach the half-discovered beauty of the universe, finds that it flies before him as if to lead him on to a fullness of loveliness which he can never find. Behind all that they think or do or love or seek for is a deep persistent hunger for something higher.

¶ 'Oh, why did no one tell me that the colours would fade,' cries Ruskin, 'and that the glory of the earth would vanish; and that the soul asks and must have something bigger and better and more splendid than this earth can give it?'

Christianity offers itself to men conscious of its power to speak to a universal desire and to give the answer to a universal quest. The question is often asked, 'What is Christianity?' and to that question there are many answers. All true Christian experience replies, 'Christianity is Christ.' It is a religion; but its distinctive characteristic is the message of the Christ as Saviour. It implies a creed; but its basis is the revelation of a Person. It becomes an ethical system; but its controlling principle is devotion to Christ. It lives as a Church, a society of souls; but its bond of fellowship and vital secret are Christ. 'Christianity,' said Bishop Creighton, 'means not a system, not a body of doctrines, not even a Church—but a Person, Jesus.' Christian experience consists in a vision of that Person and the effect of that vision upon life.

There is a magic in the *Imitatio Christi* which makes it an immortal handbook of the Spirit; it is the magic of the name of Jesus. St Bernard of Clairvaux, mighty monk and master of kings, writes a poem and breathes into it the fragrance of his faith, and a modern poet renders it into the clear cadences of our English speech—

But what to those who find? Ah! this
Nor tongue nor pen can show;
The love of Jesus, what it is
None but His loved ones know.

'This one thing,' writes Archbishop Benson of his revered schoolmaster, Prince Lee, 'is the first and last thing we learned of him, that the personal friendship of Jesus Christ our Lord was the gift which God was incarnate to bestow on every man who sought it.' 'This is the will of him that sent me,' said Christ Himself, 'that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on him should have eternal life.' And so in an experience which knits up the Christian generations into a unique spiritual unity, there has been, there is, a new strange blessedness for those who can

Gaze one moment on the Face, whose beauty
Wakes the world's great hymn;
Feel it one unutterable moment
Bent in love o'er him;

In that look feel heaven, earth, men and angels
Distant grow and dim;
In that look feel heaven, earth, men and angels
Nearer grow through Him.

2. To those who see Christ thus the one and only failure that matters is the failure to respond to that vision when it is offered. The real tragedy of life is to be blind to Jesus. It is possible to stand in His Presence and yet not see Him.

¶ There was a picture by Mr Dicksee exhibited in the Academy some years ago, and familiar now in print upon the walls of English homes, with the title 'The Two Crowns.' Clad in glittering armour and wearing his jewelled crown, a king rides his white charger in royal progress through the city streets, while maidens scatter flowers before him. Regardless of all else, his uplifted eye is turned toward a Crucifix which hangs by the wayside, and he gazes upon the image of Christ in His Passion with His crown of thorns which overshadows him, strange contrast to the pageantry of his own regal magnificence! It happened that one stood looking at that picture, and as he tried to take in its lesson overheard the comments of the passing crowd which thronged the picture gallery on that summer day. 'Who painted it?' asked one to whom its chief interest was the personality of the artist. 'What is it worth?' asked another whose eyes were blinded to the painted message by calculations about its market value. 'What exquisite colouring!' said a third who saw only beauty of design and brilliancy of execution. At last one came by, and in a low, hushed voice said to a friend, 'What a contrast!' And only he saw the picture and had a vision of its meaning.

It is only the Christian who sees Christ; to others He is but a literary figure, or an historical problem, or an inexplicable influence; they have not the vision of what He is. Christ was veiled to the Pharisee because of his self-righteous pride: He was veiled to the Sadducee because of his determined scepticism: He was veiled to Herod, though he had desired for a long time to see Him, for he saw Him only through the blinding mist of his arrogant lusts. And so because Christ is the eternal antithesis to sin and self-assertion, the world which knows so much about Him still knows Him not, though its heart is unsatisfied.

3. There are two questions which claim an answer as we think of the quest for Christ.

(1) Where and how can we gain the vision? Even from His Church Jesus was hidden till He died and rose again, and the full meaning of His message was obscure till it stood out large and luminous in the light of His Cross and Resurrection. Speculate about Jesus, make Him a mere theological thesis, admire Him and learn from Him only as the supreme religious philosopher, and we will not see Him. But kneel at His Cross and hear His 'It is finished,' and yield our souls to Him in the submission of faith, and to us with all His saints there will come the Epiphany of Himself, and one unveiling which makes God real, and brings redemption within the range of practical experience, a gift to possess and a life to live.

(2) What is the price to be paid for that vision? It is twofold. First, Search. 'Seek ye my face.' Desire and longing must pass into earnest and believing quest. If we would see Christ we must seek Him. It is an old road, the road of secret prayer, the road of reading His Scriptures, the road of worship; a road plain but not easy, for it leads away from fashionable self-assertion to the low door of self-humiliation. It is wet with the tears of generations of penitents, and a man can travel along it only upon his knees. But it leads to Jesus, and that is everything.

Secondly, Surrender. We must have Christ on His own terms or we will not have Him at all. 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' Those deep words of St Paul take shape in the *Imitation*: 'If a man should give all his wealth, yet it is nothing; and if he should outwardly express great repentance, yet it is little; and if he should be of great virtue, and very fervent devotion, yet there is much wanting, to wit one thing, and that most necessary. That leaving all he forsake himself and go wholly from himself.'

Life through Death

John xii. 24.—'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.'

1. Jesus Christ abolished death in the only way in which a stubborn fact can be abolished—

by showing that it is not what it appears to be. Death appears to be the seal of failure, it is the condition of success; it appears to be an end, it is also a beginning; it appears to be a humiliation and a curse, but its cleansing waters purge the soul of her travel-stains, and land her refreshed upon the farther shore. Death, says science, is but a law of Nature. Death, says Jesus Christ, is nothing save the gate through which one passes into immortal life. Death is a law, if we will have it so. The rhythm of growth and decay may seem to swing evenly backwards and forwards. The study of Nature may, and probably will, lead us only to the stoic's resolve to steel the heart against emotions which tend to discontent or rebellion against Nature's laws. Very many have tried to be content with this courageous submission.

And yet death is the gate of life. What was the secret, the hidden source, of St Paul's joyous attitude towards the thought of death? What made him so sure that 'to die is gain'? His belief in the Resurrection, of course. But this belief rested, not only on what he saw in the clouds on the road to Damascus, not only on the reports of the Twelve and the survivors of the 'five hundred brethren' who had seen the risen Christ, but on the overpowering conviction that death has no sting to those who know the hidden laws of life. The passage from death to life is the open secret of the universe which Jesus Christ brought to light. In the external world it is exemplified in every harvest-field. 'That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.' The seed 'dies'; it does not perish entirely, else the analogy would fail, but it dies as a seed, and takes new life as a blade.

> First the grain, and then the blade—
> The one destroyed, the other made;
> Then stalk and blossom, and again
> The gold of newly minted grain.
>
> So Life, by Death the reaper cast
> To earth, again shall rise at last;
> For 'tis the service of the sod
> To render God the things of God.[1]

St Paul's analogy, like most appeals to external Nature made by religious teachers, is rather poetical than scientific. We cannot remain on purely scientific ground when we are dealing with religion, because religion is concerned not only with existence, but with values. When we look at the ceaseless flux of Nature from this point of view, some new considerations suggest themselves. If there is no final upward movement for any living thing, but only a curve ending on the same plane as the starting-point; if all Nature is simply a repetition of the same processes, then it has no value and no meaning at all. Such a world would be an irrational world. However, so far as we know, there is no such thing as unending repetition in Nature. The planets are cooling; the sun is cooling, though recent discoveries give him a longer life than was formerly believed. There is only one way in which the values of life can escape the doom of the existences to which they are linked, and that is by constant transmutation into values of a higher quality. Cling to them as they are, and they fade and perish; let them go, make a living sacrifice of them, and they will still be ours, transmuted and enhanced. In St Paul's words, 'Thou sowest not that body which shall be, but bare grain.' If we make a living sacrifice of ourselves in reasonable service to God, the new man whom we shall put on is not just our old selves back again, but a new self, nearer to the image of God.

2. This mysterious law of the spiritual world, the law of death and rebirth as the condition of all growth and all permanence, has been dimly perceived by nearly all religions. Men have felt that everywhere in Nature God has stamped some hint of the law of rebirth. The changing seasons, the rising and setting suns, time itself, with its mysterious register, human memory—all point to the central law of the higher life: 'That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.' This train of thought has its value as an argument for our survival after death. Without undervaluing the argument from Divine justice, which is not satisfied, so far as we can see, by the distribution of rewards and punishments in this world; without undervaluing the confident claim of human love, which asserts its prerogative as the most Divine part of our nature, to insist that it has the quality of everlastingness, so that neither death nor life can separate us from love, whether human or Divine, or terminate our capacities of loving and being loved—without undervalu-

[1] J. B. Tabb.

ing these arguments, perhaps the strongest argument for immortality is the unquenchable conviction that in the mind of God values are facts, and indestructible facts. Whatever has value in God's sight is safe for evermore; time and change cannot touch it.

¶ In our day the question of immortality rises out of our concern for the destiny of man's spiritual values. What is to happen to them? Are they to perish in the fatal refrigeration of a congealed planet? Will some cosmic cataclysm, ending in a wrecked or burned-out solar system, be the finale of mankind's endeavour? Or do our spiritual values spring out of creative reality, represent and reveal creative reality, find on earth a transient theatre of development and operation, and possess a hope of continuance that not even the death of the planet can stop?

For myself, I always come at the problem of immortality from that angle. My belief in life eternal springs out of the haunting faith which Ralph Waldo Emerson put into words characteristically compressed:

> What is excellent,
> As God lives, is permanent.[1]

But the law of rebirth has also an intimate bearing on our daily life. It should determine our whole attitude towards our experience. What did St Paul mean by saying, 'I die daily'? Did he simply mean that he was in constant peril of death? No; his words have a much deeper meaning. They mean that the law of sacrifice has become a constant part of his experience. He is conscious that deaths and rebirths are continually going on within him. His whole life has taught him that all gain comes through pain, all profit through loss. He began, it may be, with a hard struggle against his lower appetites. At least, his picture of the internecine warfare between flesh and spirit, too strongly painted to represent the average experience, must surely have been drawn from his own spiritual combat. Then there came the call to surrender the pride of legal righteousness, and the treasure, too highly valued, of Rabbinical learning. All that he had counted gain was now to be set down as loss—that he might win Christ. Henceforth he walked the earth as one already dead, and yet continually dying anew, always bearing about with him the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of the Lord Jesus might be made manifest in him. He knew well that it is the nature of all earthly things, either to perish and be lost, or to be transmuted into values of a higher quality.

¶ This may be called a dying life, when a man for the love of God refuses to gratify his senses and take his natural pleasure, and follow his own will; and as many lusts as he died to, so many deaths does he offer to God, and so many fruits of life will he receive in return. For in what measure a man dies to himself, and grows out of himself, in the same measure does God, who is our Life, enter into him.[1]

¶ Christians have cheapened their calling until even bearing the cross has become a synonym for a shallow philanthrophy or a complacent self-sacrifice. It is no easy thing to 'die with Christ.' It means the violent breaking-down of every attachment, the testing and rejection of every trusted aid to self-regard, the stripping bare of the whole self. It means an intolerable agony as mind and flesh yearn for the dear familiar environment, for home and friends, for daybreak and the stars, for the secret ambitions and delights that each one of us holds buried in his heart. The time comes when we know that they must be left behind, when nothing remains—unless it be God. None of us pass through those moments unchanged: in them we are stamped indelibly with the marks that our fellow-sufferers recognize, the marks of our emancipation into the eternal.[2]

It is our wisdom to live with this thought of gain through loss always before our minds. And then, when the last sacrifice is demanded of us—the sacrifice of our lives—we shall find it easy to trust death to do for us what the daily dyings of life have always done for us—to take away much and to give us more, to deprive us of earth that it may give us heaven.

3. If we could face the changes and chances of this life in the simple faith that they are meant to be stepping-stones, and not stumbling-blocks; if we could face them with a fixed resolve to tear the heart of goodness out of what appears to us as evil, confident that all things must work together for good to those who love

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Spiritual Values and Eternal Life*, 13.

[1] Tauler.
[2] C. E. Raven, *Jesus and the Gospel of Love*, 276.

God, how much useless friction and fretting we should escape, and how much braver and happier our lives would be! This is the secret of Christian optimism, which makes it so different from the shallow kinds of optimism which offer in vain to 'heal slightly' the wounds of life. Christianity shirks nothing, ignores nothing. It does not starve the emotions in the hope of becoming invulnerable. That last act of cowardice, which makes stoicism false to itself, it renounces. It rejoices heartily with those that rejoice, and weeps sincerely with them that weep. It does not class the purest earthly joys and the tenderest earthly sorrows as things indifferent. It is not ashamed to feel, and to feel deeply. But it finds a heart of joy in the midst of sorrow. It is able even to glory in weakness and tribulation, as the appointed birth-pangs of a richer life. It combats and overcomes temporal evils, not by refusing to recognize them, but by transmuting them. It teaches us that all values are permanent, but that all, in so far as they are linked with time and change, must die in order that they may live for ever.

Why Some Miss Life

John xii. 25.—'He that loveth his life shall lose it.'

When Jesus speaks about 'losing life' or 'hating life' we have always got to remember that He is thinking of life not as a physical thing, nor in terms of infinitely extended years, but as a certain quality of life. And in this particular context He has in mind the contrast between what we call 'life' and what He calls 'life.' It is to find what He calls 'life' that we have to lose what we call 'life.' When Christ defined life, He defined it in terms of God. 'This is life . . . to know God.' And God is love. The first and great commandment is 'Thou shalt love.'

1. *The Purpose of Life.*—Browning is right when he asserts that

For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
. . . . . .
Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love.

Here, we may feel, is an adequate purpose for life; for we ourselves have learnt to estimate love at a higher value than knowledge, skill, or culture. As we hear of some unselfish act, the giving of life for life; or something smaller, the sharing of poverty to relieve someone heavily burdened; the sacrifice of money or time to make a dull life more interesting; we feel we would rather have our part in that, than in making some speech that drew thunders of applause or in writing some poem which at once placed us in the front rank of the men of letters. It is the one thing worth doing. Henry Drummond's experience is felt to be true: He had seen almost all the beautiful things God had made, and enjoyed almost every pleasure that He had planned for men; 'and yet as I look back I see standing out above all the life that has gone four or five short experiences when the love of God reflected itself in some poor imitation, some small act of love of mine, and these seem to be the things which alone of all one's life abide. Everything else in all our life is transitory, every other good is visionary. But the acts of love, which no man knows about or can ever know about, they never fail.'

¶ George Eliot writes: 'To me it seems that a year could not bring any one a more substantial good than the certitude of having helped another to bear some heavy burden—of having lessened pain and given the sweetness of fellowship in sorrow. That is just the one good which seems the more worth having the more our own life is compassed with shadows.'

Here we seem to see a purpose that covers all life, for all may love. Neither the rich nor the poor, neither the wise nor the ignorant, have any advantage here. Every one starts fair, and every circumstance of life may minister to its growth. It may indeed be said that poverty and hardship are more successful in developing the grace than wealth and comfort—but if this be so the wealthy have only to part with their money, and the leisured to join the army of workers, to be on the same level with those who perhaps might be said to have easier conditions for the prize. A critic might rule out suffering as being in itself likely to produce sourness of temper and a harsh and sullen demeanour, but human experience proves that he is wrong, for Love has won its most notable successes amongst sufferers. And not only does it cover life here but life beyond. It is difficult to think of any gift we shall need there but Love.

What is the meaning and purpose of life? To win the prize of learning Love—'learning'

the poet rightly says, for Love is not gained in a day or a year. It needs a long and varied apprenticeship if it is to be well learned. It is not a mere impulse, a sentiment, or a strong emotion. When fully formed, we find it has patience, generosity, humility, courtesy, meekness, magnanimity, sincerity, and kindness, and not one of these is learnt in a day. We may think ourselves patient until one day ill health and contradiction find us out. We think we are fair till our political opponent's character is discussed, and then we find we allow an unworthy suspicion to rest upon it. And if other parts of the lesson seem easy, we stumble over meekness and humility.

¶ There is no learning that can be compared with learning what love and kindness are; no absolute loss or gain except the loss or gain of love and kindness: no real growth or getting on save by growing more sensitive to love and kindness, more loving and more kind.[1]

2. *The Revelation of Love.*—Life is just our chance of winning love. But 'love is of God,' and it is only as we seek it in Him that we find its perfection.

Because this human Love, though true and sweet—yours and mine—
Has been sent by Love more tender, more complete, more divine,
That it leads our hearts to rest in Heaven, far above you.

Human love will not satisfy: nor will it do all that love ought to do. We seek for a greater gift. 'The soul is made for God and can find its rest only in Him.' But where may we find Him? It is true theoretically that the world is full of love because the world is full of God. But it is unhappily true that as we look out upon the world hatred is more manifest than love, competition than co-operation, selfishness than generosity. But there are to be found hill-tops in the dull level plain of existence from which men have seen the rising sun, the dawn of a new day. Life has been redeemed by countless individual acts of sacrifice, friend dying for friend, mother for child, husband for wife. Not a few have by their actions shown the Divine Spirit, mounting to the topmost heights of heroism and devotion. But these were only isolated points of human existence, subject to those necessary limitations which individuality presupposes. The world needed a full revelation instead of a point of light here and there. And about 2000 years ago it came; in Jesus of Nazareth the Love of God blazed forth fully and without measure.

At first the meaning of this wonderful revelation of Love was not understood. It had been so lost that it was hated instead of admired. This, however, proved no disadvantage, for the contradiction and hostility only brought out more clearly its inherent beauty. Strength was seen, as it always is, in the suffering involved in the Great Venture made for the world. It was when He was faced by determined hatred, when His teaching was fiercely contradicted, when His best works were publicly denounced as diabolical, when now and again men rushed at Him or took up stones to destroy Him, that the world learnt what love was.

In Jesus Christ love was incarnate. And it had been seen, handled, and conversed with. The significance of all the wonderful past suddenly flashed before these early Christians as some lightning flash irradiates a dark city; and with its significance came an overmastering desire to communicate it to others. Love was within them, burning, illuminating, inspiring. They were at once possessed by a desire to benefit one another instead of themselves. These Jews with their national characteristic of self-interest became absorbed in the concerns of the whole body. No man cared for his own but all men for the things of others. The joy of these strong individualists who had found only an occasional interest outside their own family was now seen to be in the community.

¶ Santi Deva, the great Buddhist saint, declared that what is wrong with the world is that we all make self the centre round which life revolves; that we think for self, and act for self, and live for self. Now, said he, I am going to cast out this self, and put the love of others in its place, will make my life revolve round that, will henceforth think for others, act for others, live for others, making them my self.[1]

3. *Missing Life.*—Knowing that love is the one thing needed to bring joy, peace and fruitfulness into our life, Christ has shown us how it may be attained. The prize is at our feet,

[1] Bishop Paget.

[1] A. J. Gossip, *The Galilean Accent*, 9

we need but to stoop low to take it up. And yet it is undeniable that many miss it.

Now what is the cause of this failure? The great things still remain: the love of God as seen in the Incarnation and Passion of His Son; the beauty of God as seen in Nature and in man; the glory of God as seen in the Life and Resurrection of Christ; and a widening hope of humanity as seen in the work of the Church at home and abroad and the advance in Christian nations towards a larger freedom and more equitable laws. These remain and are witnesses to the presence of love amongst us, and there ought to be a growing consciousness of it. But men have brought in to the conception of the Christian faith the ideas they have borrowed from the world. There is a widespread belief that the principles which make for advancement here will obtain there. Either that of privilege: 'We have Abraham for our father,' or that of merit: 'We have done that which it was our duty to have done,' are felt to suffice. We forget that a large part of the New Testament is occupied with combating this. The doctrine of salvation by works against which St Paul inveighs seems to have a temporary reference to matters of the Jewish law, circumcision, ritual and the like. When, however we look below the surface. we see he is attacking a disposition widespread as humanity —the tendency to base future expectation on what we have done rather than on what Christ has done for and in us.

¶ It is recorded that when Raphael died, the picture of the Transfiguration which now hangs in the Vatican was carried before his bier—as much as to say, 'The man who is coming after, is the man who painted this.'

It is this tendency that meets us in the Parable of the Marriage Supper. One of the guests thinks his own dress, we might say his own character, adequate for admission to the banquet, but no sooner is he seated than he feels how much out of place he is. Or again in the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, Christ pictures men concentrating their attention not on God's Love but on His fairness. A man has agreed, as it were, to work for a penny a day, and he expects when the work is over to be paid for it. And he is paid exactly. He does have his wage. But it is not that of love. As he sees those who have taken another estimate of life, who have always recognized the impossibility of making any adequate response to the greatness of God's Love, who have thrown themselves upon His mercy and rejoiced in His marvellous generosity, as he sees these obtaining the great prize of fellowship with Eternal Love, he wonders why he who has been scrupulous about duty and fulfilment of obligations takes a lower place.

The mistake, then, that many make, and in so doing sink gradually as the years go on into a narrower and smaller life, lies in substituting for the principle of love as taught by Christ the principle of merit as taught by the world. If the goal aimed at were simply a position in which every circumstance pleased, if it were the heaven on which many set their eyes as a compensation for the trials of earth, much as a man looks on a coveted house and garden as the ultimate reward for his hard work, merit would have a claim to be heard. And it is possible that the penny of the Parable of the Labourers may represent some eternal wage, some return for a quiet, cold, respectable life.

¶ When the farmer in Tennyson's poem [1] lies dying, he recalls two facts: the first is, that there are 'Thurnaby hoälms to plow'; the second, that he had 'stubb'd Thurnaby waäste.' From the first, he concludes that the Almighty must be making a mistake in taking him away just then:

A mowt 'a taäen owd Joänes, as 'ant not a aäpoth o' sense,
Or a mowt 'a taäen young Robins—a niver mended a fence.

From the second fact it appears that if he has to die, he at least will, at any rate, enter the next world accredited. With his depreciation of Jones and Robins, by the comparative method, there goes a corresponding depreciation of the other sex, in the person of a certain Bessie Marris with her 'barne': 'She wur a bad un, sheä.' And along with the pleasing retrospect of 'Thurnaby waäste' brought under cultivation, there is the comforting thought that, when the parson came to visit him, he paid the parson's tithe:

Parson's a beän loikewoise, an' a sittin' 'ere o' my bed.
'The amoighty's a taäkin o' you to 'issen, my friend,' a said,

[1] *Northern Farmer.*

An' a towd ma my sins, an's toithe were due, an' I gied it in hond.
I done moy duty boy 'um, as I 'a done boy the lond.

It never occurs to the farmer that Bessie Marris and her 'barne' might turn up at the final audit and bring his balance out on to the wrong side, notwithstanding all the tithe he had paid.[1]

When we think of fellowship with Perfect Love, the vision and enjoyment of that Love lies at the back of all the beauty and unselfishness we see in the world, merit is ridiculous. Knowledge and a correct ritual rank low in the scale of those virtues that belong to the disciples of Christ. Love makes one demand; and that is 'Thou shalt love.' But it is not only that they have a wrong aim in life, but they find a perpetual difficulty in the way in which the Christian aim is presented. Love is put aside because the Cross is necessarily involved in it. Christ always insisted upon that. His life in the open, enduring daily the contradiction of sinners, battling against wrong, worldliness and vanity, careless of fatigue, hunger and discomfort—that was the life to be followed. Again and again He would say as though that summed up everything, 'Follow me.' Belief in Him did not simply mean a belief in one thing He had said, or in one teaching He had given, but in the whole life that lay behind the teaching. He was the only Life. And men who felt that, knew that Life lay in taking up the Cross in the spirit of love.

Self-denial may be a dull duty, but sacrifice has in it the joy of a great love and of all work well done. For a man to go all out in pursuit of the best he knows is the most thrilling experience he can have. It is more blessed to give than to receive. And that way is the healing of the world's wounds. And every sacrifice will strengthen our conviction that neither life nor death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, or from one another in Him.

This experience is unknown to those who in the Apostle's words 'love their life.' They have either mistaken the object of life altogether, have looked upon it as an end instead of a means, or they have imported into it the rules they have learned from the world in which they live. They have never made the great venture though often on the edge of it, never faced the Crucified and offered their all though often stirred by His example. Life has been an endeavour to get as much happiness and comfort as was possible without the sacrifice of principle, hoping that the conservation of principle may secure the other life. And unconsciously the heart that was made to grow ever larger and more generous has contracted, because it has failed to perceive its development depended on giving rather than receiving, on losing rather than gaining.

What thing thou lovest most, thou mak'st its value thine,
Earthly if that be earth; if that be God, divine.

[1] J. Rendel Harris.

Our Reply to Life

John xii. 27.—'Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.'

The other three Evangelists had told the story of the Garden of Gethsemane, St John does not repeat it, but he tells us of an earlier Gethsemane. In this earlier Gethsemane our Lord stands at the edge of the abyss and is looking down into its depths. The great object of the Evangelist, as he tells us, has been to show forth the glory of Christ: first the glory of His life, and then the glory of His death. This is the point of transition from the one to the other.

1. Charles Reade points out in one place that it is given us to see the heroes of the world only after their minds have been made up, and they are moving resolutely forward with firm steps, and not when their uncertain hearts are feeling their way to a decision, adding as his opinion that, were that latter visible to us, they would not seem nearly so heroic. Is that so? Is anything in the Gospels more helpful to men than those passages in which it is vividly brought home to us that our Lord's triumph was not an instinct, but a virtue; that faith was not automatic to Him, but that every time He had to think out what God's will for Him was? Sometimes He had to feel for His Father's hand to help and guide and steady Him in darkness in which He Himself could not see at all. It was our very fight He had to fight, and our very weapons were His only weapons; He did all He did just through a valiant heart, and a

great faith that followed unafraid even where He could not understand.

Our Lord had known when He set out for Jerusalem that it meant doom. And the disciples felt that too. On their arrival, indeed, there had been a roar of noisy welcome in the streets. But Christ was not deceived by that. The dry grass had caught fire, and for a little it was blazing merrily, but in a moment or two it would certainly go out. The end, He felt, was certain. And his mind was disquieted. Ought He to die, and to die now? He was not sure, and He felt that He must be sure. Ought He to die, just there, just then, without one soul that as yet really understood? Was it God's will for Him that He should throw away His life before the truths for which He stood had germinated in some hearts at least?

The visit of the Greeks may have started some of these questions with the hint that the door into the wider world stood open. Beyond that door—came the whisper in His soul—who knows but that there might be a hearing, an appreciation of His message, a welcome for His gospel? The doubts and perplexities began to thicken about His mind. He was like a ship which for some time has been moving out to sea amid a gathering storm, and now begins to feel the buffeting of the waves and the vicious blast of the gale which is very shortly going to take her to its breast. 'Now is my soul troubled,' said Jesus. 'Now is my soul disquieted.'

That is the picture that John sets before us—the picture of a man facing the very worst that life can do. Let us realize that. The physical was but a fraction of what Jesus was facing. For no one ever loved as He; and love means capacity for pain. Loneliness, hatred, treachery, were all in the cup; and this above all, that in crucifying Him they were putting to death their own souls. Every form of suffering was threatening Jesus—the suffering of a patriot who sees his country destroying itself, of a leader whose men desert him, of a friend whose friends betray him, of a Saviour who is slain by those whom He loves even unto death.

But the point to notice is that this suffering, as suffering so often does, awakens a question. Our question in regard to suffering is often the question, Why? Why is it that we have had to go through so much? That is not the question of Jesus. He does not ask, Why do I suffer? His question is, What shall I say? In other words, What answer shall I make to life which so threatens and opposes me? What reply shall I give to those fears and doubts and shadows that rise within my soul? It is this question which determines whether a man shall let himself drift, as it were, and become the plaything of life and circumstances; or whether he shall find in life a challenge to courage and faith, a challenge that releases unseen powers within him, and may turn a commonplace life into that of a hero or a saint.

2. It is the belief of all those who have thought deeply about life and the troubles that come to all who take life seriously, that these troubles have a meaning, and that their meaning is to awaken such a reply as shall make us the masters of circumstances and not their slave. Crave, as we may, for an easy life, one clear fact rises from the story of man's victory and progress. It is by the sting of hardship and opposition and difficulty that his spirit has been awakened. Scientific men are coming to feel that this is even true, in a sense, of the lowest forms of life out of which man has been developed. They have suggested that even in the lowest creatures there is some speck of will which is stung into effort by opposition, and which makes progress by overcoming difficulties. Sir J. Arthur Thomson puts the matter in a striking phrase: 'The response of the organism to external stimulus,' he says, 'is of the nature, not of a rebound, but of a reply.' In other words, the progress of creation rising out of swamp and jungle has been won by struggle with circumstances, not by surrender to them. Nature has touched life and awakened a reply from something akin to a living spirit. At any rate, when we come to think of the soul of man, is not this true? Life had been hard, and it demanded a reply, and their reply was some stroke of courage, some step of faith, some energy of struggle which produced a victorious personality.

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

¶ The circumstances of his life made Stevenson regard life as primarily a fight, and he was a brave and not unhappy warrior. He wrote to George Meredith : ‘ For fourteen years I have not had a day’s real health ; I have wakened sick and gone to bed weary ; and I have done my work unflinchingly. I have written in bed, and written out of it, written in hemorrhages, written in sickness, written torn by coughing, written when my head swam for weakness ; and for so long, it seems to me I have won my wager and recovered my glove. I am better now, have been, rightly speaking, since I first came to the Pacific ; and still, few are the days when I am not in some physical distress. And the battle goes on—ill or well, is a trifle; so as it goes. I was made for a contest, and the Powers have so willed that my battlefield should be this dingy, inglorious one of the bed and the physic bottle.’ [1]

What reply shall we make to life ? There are various answers that a man may give to that question. Some, like Hamlet, never get beyond the hesitation point. But Hamlet’s tragic end is a true picture of what happens when a man is content to let life slip through his hands without giving answer to the question. The real beginning of Christianity is in this decision —in making up our minds for once and all what reply we are going to make to life in the hour when our soul is troubled with pain or disquieted by temptation.

3. What was the reply of Jesus ? The first word He spoke gives us the clue to His attitude. He said, ‘ Father.’ Out there in the gathering storm He saw many things. Blow upon blow of hatred, cruelty, malice, treachery, were preparing to strike Him down. Many people have looked into that kind of tempest and seen nothing except a blinding mist, ‘ a thing of sound and fury, signifying nothing.’ Some have looked into it and seen a glimmering purpose striving blindly through the storm to some great end which is beyond us—but without heart, without any care for our individual lives. Jesus looked into it and He said, ‘ Father.’ He recognized someone there whose love enfolded His life. He saw God victorious amid all this strife of man’s puny plans and selfish passion. He heard the whisper of His voice saying, ‘ This is my beloved Son.’ That sense of God’s love was His most precious possession. It is the most wonderful thing in all human experience—Jesus’ consciousness of God. Men may call it a dream if they will. But *He* was the most clear-eyed soul who ever lived. Most of us are doped and drugged at some point or other. We live in a kind of dreamland of deception about many things—the value of money, for instance, and pleasure. To Jesus the consciousness of God the Father was the most real thing in His life. Even when things looked blackest, and when everything around Him shrieked against it, it held. ‘ Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?’ And the first word that slipped out in reply was ‘Father.’

Some people tell us that the Christian faith in the Fatherhood of God and in His loving purpose is far too frail a thing to stand the strain of life. But it was just *here* that Jesus said, ‘ Father.’ His was no fair-weather faith. It was a faith that stood the test when life was at its worst. Here is One who went along the corridor of life right through to its darkest cranny, like an explorer in some cavern which has never been open to the light, and He has come back to tell us that there, where things are at their worst, this faith holds. It is worth thinking about, that His reply to life at its worst is to cry, ‘ Father.’ Somewhere, at the heart of all experience, there is a living, loving Will, One who knows us for His children, and who out of it all has guidance and strength to give us, and the grip of a hand by which He can pull us through.

¶ Beneath the Falls of Niagara there is a cave called the Cave of the Winds. Visitors are permitted with a guide to go down into it. When you are there you are conscious at first of nothing except the deafening roar of waters, while your eyes are filled with blinding spray. But there is one thing of which you become gladly conscious—the grip of the guide’s hand, a hand with a pull in it, by which you are led through to safety and sunlight.

Blindfold I walk this life’s bewildering maze ;
Up flinty steep, through frozen mountain pass,
Through thorn-set barren and through deep
morass ;
But strong in faith I tread the uneven ways,
And bare my head unshrinking to the blast,
Because my Father’s arm is round me cast ;
And if the way seems rough, I only clasp
The hand that leads me with a firmer grasp.

[1] Sidney Dark, *Robert Louis Stevenson*, 294.

4. But this attitude to life took further form. It shaped itself into a prayer. And what did He pray? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But no! 'For this cause came I unto this hour.' In other words, He did not ask for escape from life as it threatened Him. Life does not bring us into trouble that we should use our faith merely to escape from it. Some bigger, stronger reply He must make who had God for Father. And He went on, 'Father, glorify thy name.' In other words, He did not ask to be saved *from* trouble, which is no salvation at all. He asked to be saved *in* trouble—to be saved from discouragement and fear and lovelessness, from all that might keep His Spirit from burning with that love and courage which are the glory of God in men, and through which God rules and works victoriously over evil. He asked that in the midst of the trouble His Spirit might be an undimmed lamp for God's light. The result of that prayer was a reply to life in the Spirit of Jesus which is the most wonderful and victorious thing in all history, a reply of love and forgiveness and courage which changed the heart of the dying thief as he hung cursing on his cross, and made even the Roman captain who was directing the crucifixion cry, 'Truly this was the Son of God.'

Is this not the way in which Jesus calls on us too, and inspires us to make our reply to life? We are so apt to pray to be saved from the hour of our soul's disquiet and to look to God's Fatherhood for our deliverance out of the trouble. There are times, of course, when that is His way of deliverance. But God's answer to our deepest need is not the external deliverance, and it is not this attitude which is the Christian reply to life. The true reply is that of Jesus. Make me fit for the strain, O God. Give me courage for the load. Let me not fail in the hour of temptation. This is the way in which all the external deliverances are really wrought—not by the act of God without, digging us out of difficulty or breaking down the walls of opposition; but through His coming into our hearts so that we may dig our way out, and His awaking the spirit in us which can conquer and rise above the trouble. The true victory of God in a world of evil is not that world made beautiful by some stroke of His power: it is in the hearts of men who are made strong and pure in Him, a new creation through which all things become new.

My sorrow had pierced me through, it throbbed
in my heart like a thorn;
This way and that I stared, as a bird with
a broken limb
Hearing the hound's strong feet thrust imminent
through the corn,
So to my God I turned; and I had forgotten
Him.

What was the answer? This—the horrible
depth of night,
And deeper, as ever I peer, the huge cliff's
mountainous shade,
While the frail boat cracks and grinds, and
never a star in sight,
And the seething waves smite fiercer;—and
yet I am not afraid.[1]

The Magnetism of the Cross

John xii. 32.—'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.'

A MORE unlikely prophecy than this was never addressed to human ears. When the words were spoken it might well seem that the ministry of Jesus had ended in failure. He had proclaimed His Divine message, and it had fallen on deaf ears; He had performed mighty works, and they only credited Him with the help of Beelzebub. What greater thing would He do to change unbelief into faith, to transmute indifference into devotion and hatred into love? The reply was that the transformation would be brought about not by doing, but by suffering.

And it is matter of history that the prophecy has been accomplished both as to result and means. Jesus has drawn unto Himself, if not all men, at least representatives of all races and classes of the human family. It is true that there are other factors which enter into the compelling power of Jesus Christ. It owes much to the spell of His teaching about God and man, salvation and duty—that teaching which in form was beautiful as the flowers of spring or the tints of the sunrise, in matter as high as the stars and as deep as the sea. Part

[1] A. C. Benson.

of it also is due to the spell which is laid upon the soul by the character of Christ—in its unique union of heavenly majesty with a tenderness passing the love of woman. But it is above all as the Man of Sorrows, as the Crucified, that Jesus has been enthroned in believing hearts, and has become the object of human love, gratitude and trust.

¶ That extraordinarily gifted mystic and poet, William Blake, in his book on Jerusalem has a plate of the Crucifixion. The atmosphere is sombre, save for one thin ray of sunshine that reveals Christ on the Cross, and at the foot of the Cross, not the fainting mother, not the beloved disciple, not the centurion or Joseph of Arimathæa, but a solitary human figure of indistinguishable type, with outstretched arms, gazing upwards to the Christ. It is the very daring of genius, which in the moment of His supreme weakness sets the world with its wistful, passionate gesture of appeal in the presence of the Sufferer. And yet, perhaps, it is neither genius nor daring which accomplished so bold an utterance of sacred art, but simple understanding of our Lord's own mind.

The Cross of Christ has at least three different aspects, of which each makes a strong appeal to heart or mind, and which, in acting together, have invested it with a unique significance for the spiritual sense of mankind.

1. *The Tragedy of the Cross.*—Beginning with its human aspect, we observe that the sufferings and death of Christ arrest our attention and claim our sympathy as the most tragic event recorded in history. Upon this earth there appeared once a Teacher who preached a gospel of Divine and human love—who sought to persuade men to love the God who loved them in spite of their sins, and also to love one another, and to show their love by being kind, merciful, and forgiving. And as was His message, so was His life. He held communion with the Father in a life of filial trust and obedience and of stainless purity, while He spent Himself and was spent in preaching the glad tidings of the gospel to all, in saving outcast men and fallen women from their degradation, and in assuaging, whether by the power of His sympathy or of His gifts of healing, the distress of many who had been sorely stricken by disease or left poor and desolate by the ravages of time and death. The world, with its burdens of sin and sorrow, had need of Him; there were reasons enough, one thinks, why it should have welcomed Him; but as a fact it united its forces against the Christ and condemned Him to suffer on the Cross the extremity of shame and agony which was reserved for the worst of malefactors. Little wonder, therefore, that when the world came to know the true facts, its heart was stirred to its depth with sympathy and remorse, and that the story of the death of Christ was burned into its memory as a crime which is without parallel for a combination of self-deception and wickedness.

2. *The Discovery of the Cross.*—The sufferings and death of Christ have taken their place in history as the occasion and means of a stupendous discovery. The Cross of Calvary stands out memorably as the spot on which the human mind became assured of the certainty of the most sublime and important of all religious truths. In the same event which revealed the deceit and wickedness of the human heart was found the revelation of the truth that God is love. The world had before this some conception of the Divine greatness and majesty. That God was inconceivably great and infinitely wise was written upon the face of Nature. His righteousness had been confidently proclaimed by the great prophets of the Old Testament. But was there reason to believe that in the Divine Being mercy met with justice, and that He loved man with a love of the kind that is equal to self-sacrifice?

How did the death of Christ serve as a revelation and confirmation of the love of God? In two ways. In the first place, as is expressed in many passages in the New Testament, we can read the mind and heart of a giver from the nature of his gifts; and when we consider the gift of God to the world in Jesus Christ, holy and compassionate, who lived to do good, and who suffered death in the discharge of His vocation of loving service, we can believe that that stainless and self-sacrificing life was the gift of a God who was holy as Jesus was holy, and who loved man as Jesus loved.

But besides the argument from the nature of the gift, it is an element of the faith of Christendom not only that God was witnessed to by Christ, but that God was in Christ—that He who suffered and died upon the Cross was in a

unique sense Divine. What, then, is meant by affirming that the crucified Christ was Divine? There is one school which calls Christ Divine because in His person and life He revealed the character of God, and because in His influence upon men's souls He does the work of God. In Him, they say, we saw manifested the qualities that are highest in God—a power that had mastery over the world, a superhuman wisdom, a perfectly holy will and an infinitely loving heart. Those who hold the Divinity of Christ in this limited sense of His Godlikeness have seized a part of the truth, which is also a profoundly important truth, and which supplies a spiritual provision by which a soul is helped to live. But while the faith in the Godlikeness and Godlike work of Christ may help us to grope our way through the darkness, and to struggle against the difficulties and temptations of the world, it is in the power of a fuller conception of the meaning of Christ's Divinity that the Church has done its enduring work, and that the saints have lived and died. For them the Divinity of Christ has meant that He who was born in Bethlehem and crucified on Calvary was not merely a manifestation in time of Godlike qualities and purpose, but eternally God.

¶ In one of the ancient churches of Central Italy there is a unique representation of the Crucifixion. Behind the Christ on the Cross we catch a dim vision of the Eternal Father; the hands of the Father behind the hands of the Son, and the nails which pierce the Son piercing the Father also. We shrink from it at first, but as we think about it we feel that it is the old painter saying, in the only language which he could command, what has been so long and strangely forgotten, if not in form yet in reality, that God is in Christ, that the Father is in the Son, that it is His love which is embodied in the sacrifice, that the Cross and Passion are the revelation in time and space, of the grief and pain of a God who suffers for and with His creation and His children.[1]

3. *The Efficacy of the Cross.*—There is another feature of the Cross of Christ which has exercised a still more potent influence than its deep pathos and its thrilling discovery, and that is that it has been felt to possess a peculiar efficacy—to be the means by which unique benefits have been brought within the reach of sin-stricken and sorrow-laden souls. Let us touch briefly on two main aspects of the efficacy of the Cross of Christ as it has been experienced in relation to sin and sorrow.

(1) In the first place, the death of Christ is bound up with the necessary and comforting gospel of the forgiveness of sins. It is said that men of our generation no longer have the same sensitive consciousness of the guilt of sin, and of the need of pardon; but deep down in the being of all of us there goes on an ineradicable work of conscience which brings home to us in our times of solemn self-communing that we have grievously offended against a just and holy God, and that the deepest need of our souls is the assurance of His mercy and forgiveness. And in the hour when we thus realize our unworthiness, not only do we say, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' but we instinctively add, 'for Christ's sake.' We feel that we can more confidently trust in the pardoning love of God when we not merely plead our penitence and the grace of the Heavenly Father, and His own Name's sake, but when we link our unworthiness to that of the altogether worthy, and urge the merits of Him whose soul was without spot or blemish, and who was obedient unto death in the sacrifice of Calvary.

(2) In the second place, it is evident that a new power comes into the life, in the battle with temptation, and in the bearing of our burdens of sorrow, through the gospel of the tempted and sorrowing Saviour. It is a trite observation that only those can truly sympathize with trial and grief who have themselves been shaken and harrowed by a similar experience. And there is nothing in the Christian gospel, save its message of a gracious forgiveness, which has so powerfully appealed to the heart of men as the truth that God can sympathize with us in our trials, because the worst which can befall in human experience has been gathered up into the life of God in the experience of the Son of God. We may find it difficult to formulate precisely in our own thoughts what is meant by the presence of Christ at God's right hand, and the ministries of His heavenly priesthood; but the practical significance is that we can trust God for a human heart as well as for infinite wisdom and power, that we can be assured that we are present to His mind in every detail of our burdens of sorrow and sin, that He under-

[1] J. Hunter.

stands with the sympathetic understanding of one who knows all the fierceness of our temptations and all the heaviness of our sorrows.

¶ T. E. Lawrence, perhaps the most picturesque, and certainly one of the sadly disillusioned commanders in the Great War, tells us that the Arabs taught him 'that no man could be their leader except he ate the ranks' food, wore their clothes, lived level with them, and yet appeared better in himself.' How apt a commentary on the description of Christ as 'tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin,' and thus fitted to be the Captain leading us into the life with God.[1]

Let us ask how we are to make our own the benefits of our Lord's passion. With what motive do we stand before the Cross, and what response should it evoke? When we study the hymns which have as their theme the sufferings and death of Christ, we find that they express a variety of moods, and reflect different attitudes of soul. Perhaps the most edifying is that which voices itself in an appropriating and a triumphant faith:

How came the everlasting Son,
The Lord of Life, to die?
Why didst Thou meet the tempter's power,
Why, Jesus, in Thy dying hour
Endure such agony?

To save us by Thy precious blood,
To make us one in Thee,
That ours might be Thy perfect life,
Thy thorny crown, Thy cross, Thy strife,
And ours the victory.

Children of the Light

John xii. 36.—'While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.'

It was characteristic of Jesus Christ to declare Himself to be the Light, for practical ends. Light is glorious in itself: it is its own evidence and needs neither herald nor argument. Christ might have compared Himself to light in either of these respects. But light is also practical, calling to life and action, and it is clear from our Lord's words that this was the sense in which He gave Himself the name. On each of the occasions on which He used it He coupled it with a distinct call to progress or to labour. 'I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness. The night cometh when no man can work; as long as I am in the world I am the light of the world. Yet a little while is the light with you; walk while ye have the light.'

Like the sun He shines not to be gazed at but to be used. To man He is to be what the sun is for movement and for work. The Psalmist puts this effect of the sunrise in that grand passage in the 104th Psalm: 'The sun ariseth and the wild beasts get them away and lay them down in their dens. Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour till the evening.' Light is the dispersion of all that is cruel and unclean. But it is man's opportunity. Among all that a sunrise reveals—meadow and forest sparkling with dew, kindled mountain peaks, and the glory of heaven—nothing is more noticeable to this Psalmist than man going out to his daily work. It is for him—for that common figure, for that daily commonplace start again at the ordinary tasks—that the universal miracle has taken place.

¶ In one of his poems Arthur Hugh Clough gives us a realistic picture of morning in the city:

Labourers settling
Slowly to work, in their limbs the lingering sweetness of slumber;
Humble market-carts coming in, bringing in not only
Flowers, fruit, farm-store, but sounds and sights of the country
Dwelling yet on the sense of the dreamy drivers; soon after,
Half-awake servant-maids unfastening drowsy shutters
Up at the windows, or down letting in the air by the doorway.

With this general sense of what Christ meant when He called Himself the Light of the World we come to the text. Our Lord is still speaking of Himself. The Pharisees expected a Messiah, who should abide for ever; but Christ says He shall soon be taken from them, and He adds, 'While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may become the children of light.'

1. *While ye have the Light.*—When in the beginning God said: 'Let there be light, and

[1] H. S. Coffin, *The Meaning of the Cross*, 118.

there was light,' light did not spring into undivided empire, but was ordained to rule alternately with darkness. Day and night abide for ever. What was the reason, so far as man is concerned, for this restriction of so free an element as light? The readiest reason seems to be—for our relief and rest. But that is not half the reason. Our light is broken up and shortened, not only in order to afford us intervals of rest, but also to bestow upon us intensity; not only to relieve our faculties from the strain of life, but to stimulate them. According to Christ Himself, 'the night cometh when no man can work,' not merely that man may hope for release beneath its shelter, but that he may 'work while it is called to-day.' Had there been no interval, since first upon the tones of God's word light rippled across the face of the deep—had the sun been created to stand still in the midst of the heavens, then indeed one might say there would have been no progress for man. Let our imagination strike night out of the world, and we need not begin to speculate on the iron frames we men should have required to bear the unrelieved strain, for it is tolerably certain that, without the urgency and discipline which a limited day brings upon our life, we should never have been stimulated to enough of toil to make us weary. Night, which has been called the Liberator of the Slave, is far more the taskmistress of the free—a taskmistress who does not scourge nor drive us in panic, but startles our sluggishness, rallies our wandering thoughts, develops our instincts of order, reduces our impulsiveness to methods, incites us to our very best, and only then crowns her beneficence by rewarding our obedience with rest. In short, night, while she is Nature's mercy on our weakness, is Nature's purest discipline for our strength.

But all this about physical light is equally, though not so regularly, true of moral light. The moral heavens have their night for each of us, as much as the physical. Just as the sun is always shining, and yet each part of the world has its determined hours for seeing his face and its set seasons for rejoicing in his heat; so our Father in heaven, the Father of Lights, is without variableness or shadow of turning, and yet in our moral experience day and night, summer and winter, are as real facts as in the course of Nature.

That is a truth of which Scripture never ceases reminding us. There is hardly one prophet who does not proclaim how short man's day of work is—how brief and single is the summer granted to each man's character to ripen in. Sometimes it is life as a whole which they look at, and tell us that is our day; if we miss it there is nothing beyond. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest'; or again, it is of certain parts of life they speak, as of youth: 'Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth while the evil days come not'; and again, 'Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains; and while ye look for light he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.' And there are those frequent phrases which toll through Scripture like the tolling of a bell that marks the passing of a life. 'This is the day of the Lord. For he is our God, to-day if you will hear his voice. Now is the accepted time and now is the day of salvation.'

Time greatly short,
O time so briefly long,
Yea, time sole battle-ground of right and wrong:
Art thou a time for sport
And for a song? [1]

Think of the ideals of justice, of honour and of generosity, which are natural to all in their youth? A man begins his business career with the moral heaven unclouded above him. He will do, he vows to God, every act of his life in its sunshine. He will shape his conduct by all it shows him of duty, by all it puts into him of health. But his patience fails against adversity. Clouds come over his sky—they are only the mist sent up by his own weariness—and men tell him the heaven he believed in is not real: that he has worn himself out pursuing the impossible. So he turns from his ideals, and ignores them, till when he is haunted by the memory of them, and conscience wakes, he tells himself they were a boy's dream. A boy's dream? Nay, the boy's day. An old man's dream, if you like, for to him they are past and irrecoverable. But that light was the boy's day. He could have grown in it, worked in it, found true friends in it, and seen his way clear

[1] Christina Rossetti.

through the world to God and His everlasting home.

¶ Katharine Tynan has told us how Francis Thompson, the poet, died. The nuns who nursed him in the hospital at St John's Wood reported that he was such a strange, eerie man, 'all brow,' they said, with wide-open eyes looking fixedly upward. They heard him talking to himself, repeating the same thing over and over again. What was it? At length they caught the words: 'My withered dreams! My withered dreams!'

2. *Believe in the Light.*—That is, at first hearing, a strange word to use of light. And yet it is the fittest to use even of that physical light which we see by the outward eye. We do not look at the sun, for that would be to dazzle and blind us, but we use the sun's light, we read the world as he reveals it to us, we put the brightness he brings us to some practical advantage. And that is just to believe in his light. Of some men we may say that they do not believe that it is day, for they do not use it as day. They waste it, not being really awake. They ignore its value: they do not believe in it.

All this is much more true of moral light. To believe in it is to read life as it reveals life; to take as evil what it displays as evil, to hold as firm the path which it lights up before us, to hold as realities and not as dreams the ideals which it kindles in our skies, and to press on with all our hearts to their pursuit and conquest. To believe in the light is to use it; to feel that it has been given to us for practical purposes: for conduct, for the perception of truth, for the growth of character. And this was what Christ meant about Himself. Read life as I show it. Take for granted My explanation of things, and the character I give them. Use Myself, while you have Me, use Me for your life.

The beams of light which shine from Christ are many. That the Almighty is our Father, infinite in Love: that He grants forgiveness and release from despair to all who truly turn to Him; that holiness is possible, and virtue can be victorious because both are His will; that it is better for a man to bear anything rather than to sin; that work is hopeful and the doing of duty neither vain nor unblest; that suffering comes of the love of God, and is the way to peace. To believe in the light is to believe all these, and to act upon the belief.

3. *That ye may become children of Light*—that is, natives of it, with the light in our hearts and the health of it in our blood. For to-day the most of us do not live our lives with our eyes open and our hearts pure. Either we do our daily duty in blindfold routine, like a horse on the round of a mill-path, and with no sense of the meaning or the joy of what we do. Or else, if our eyes be open and our hearts keen, and we desire not to be the blind slaves of habit, we are troubled by having to turn from the use of the light to constant inquiry about it; and we are hindered in the work we have to do while it is yet day, by having perpetually to ask whether it really be day after all.

But Christ calls us through belief in the light, to that state in which we shall have burst equally from the blindness of mere habit and the shadows and perplexities of doubt; in which we shall be as little dead to God and His meaning for our life, as far from doubting or being unconscious of them, as loving children are beyond doubting or being unconscious of their father. We shall use the light with open eyes and clean hearts, as freely and joyfully doing the Father's will as Christ Himself.

¶ There is an interesting story told of Alfred Tennyson. The poet was going round his garden one day in company with a friend. Tennyson, like most Englishmen, was rather reserved when it came to the deeper things of life, and did not often speak of his religion. But as they walked his friend asked him what he thought of Jesus Christ. Tennyson walked on in silence until he came to an old-fashioned sunflower, with its fine bloom lifted to the sun, and pointing to it he said, 'What the sun is to that flower Jesus Christ is to my soul. He is the Sun of my soul.'

As One that Serveth

John xiii. 3, 4.—'Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.'

In any study of Christ's teaching, the story of the last night of His earthly life must fill a very large place. St John alone tells it fully,

so fully indeed that it practically forms nearly one-fourth of his Gospel. The opening sentence in the story of that last night strikes the very loftiest note: 'Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father.' His earthly ministry was closing; the Cross stood in clear vision before Him. Then John goes on: 'Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God'—did what? 'He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself.' That girded towel was the sign of a slave; and Christ, in the supreme moment of His earthly ministry, turns aside to a menial task; with the very hands into which His Father had put all things He washes the feet of His disciples. That seems the greatest anticlimax in history.

¶ Clement of Alexandria, writing about a century later than this Gospel, cannot get away from the astonishment of this passage. 'The Lord ate from a cheap bowl, and He washed His disciples' feet with a towel about Him—the lowly-minded God and Lord of the Universe. He did not bring a silver foot-bath from heaven to carry about with Him.'

Why did Christ, at that exact moment, and in that highest mood of feeling, gird Himself and stoop to the office of a slave? He was, for one thing, about to interpret to His disciples what may be called the ultimate law of service; the height to which He means human relations to rise; the self-sacrificing humilities of love we must exercise toward each other. Now, if all this had been delivered as a statute, and expressed in abstract and mandatory terms, it might well have been unintelligible, not to say incredible. But Christ translates the principle into concrete form; He makes it sacred by doing with His own hands what He expects us to do. He Himself washes the feet of His disciples that He may impress upon their minds the sublimity of lowly service. 'Know ye what I have done to you?' Christ asks. 'I have given you'—not a precept, or an injunction, but—'an example.' Do to each other what I have done to you. This is why, in that moment, Christ girds Himself and takes the office of a slave. And if we would understand the matchless beauty of the act, we must realize with patient effort its details.

When the disciples of Jesus arrived hot and dusty with their walk from Bethany at the house of 'the good man' who had placed an apartment at the disposal of Jesus and His friends, they doubtless found 'the large upper room furnished' with all that they required. The laver or 'basin' would be there—the large copper ewer, and 'the watering pots,' the large earthenware jars from which it might be replenished, and the towels with which the feet were to be dried. Possibly, though we have no record of the fact, one of them at once removed the Master's sandals, and washed the dust from His feet with the cool fresh water that stood ready to hand. But no one of them, it would seem, would stoop to perform that kindly office for the rest. The old rivalry, the old strife, as to which of them should take the highest place, broke out among them again; and there they stood, with dusty feet and with hot jealous hearts, wrangling as to whose duty it was to play servant to his brethren.

¶ The only time I ever heard Mr D. L. Moody speak was in our college at Glasgow, when I was a student. He came to give us an address upon the ministry. I remember his speaking about envy, jealousy in Christian work. He told us about an incident in Chicago. He had a mission in Chicago, and he had two great difficulties, he said. He fought the devil and all his works at night, and he spent the day composing quarrels between his team of evangelists, who were quarrelling as to which should have his name in greater capital letters on the advertisement bills.[1]

None of the disciples had yet learned the lesson which Jesus had so often taught, that he is the greatest who does most for others. It was to impress this neglected lesson on them that Jesus, who had already taken His place at the table, rose from the untasted supper, laid aside His flowing outer robe, girt a towel round His tunic and 'began to wash his disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.' That figure of Christ in the little upper room at Jerusalem, before He passes to His Cross, stooping to wash the feet of His disciples, and then making the act an example, is a glimpse into the eternal nature of things. It is a revelation unsurpassed in its loftiness, of the nature and mind of God, and of His ideals for the relations betwixt His creatures.

[1] James Moffatt.

¶ Many legends gather round St Francis and his Brotherhood. In one of Laurence Housman's 'Little Plays of St Francis' we see the Brothers visiting some lepers. They come 'bringing bread and a willingness to serve.' Such unexpected kindness makes some of the lepers suspicious; and one of them, half-blind, mocks their charity. They say they love him, he declares, but they would not wash his feet. One Brother gets a basin of water, though unable to keep from shuddering. Another leper beseeches him not to do so as the old blind leper is too far gone. But the Brother kneels and reaches out to take off the rags, and then the old man relents:

'Ah, mercy! Do not touch me!'
'Thy pardon, brother. Give thyself to love; and let me wash thy feet.'
'Ah! not my feet . . . not my feet only, but my hands and head!'
'Thy feet first, brother.'

As the Brother stoops to wash the leper's feet the scene fades into darkness, and suddenly one who lies dying cries out, 'Christ, gentle Christ!'

1. Jesus gave us a *true idea of God*. The uniqueness of Christ's revelation lies, indeed, exactly in this: that it is the expression of the character of God in the terms not merely of human language but of a human personality. The character of God was manifested to men not only in the words but in the *life* of Jesus, and in no other conceivable form of manifestation could it have been so fully revealed.

This is what the Son of God has done for us by His Incarnation. He expresses the idea of God in the eloquent and satisfying language of personality. We learn what God is like not by questioning the philosophers and theologians but by sitting at the feet of Jesus and realizing that in His self-sacrificing love He is revealing to us the very heart of God; that as He loves us, so God loves us; that as He suffers for us, so God suffers for us; that as He serves us, so God serves us.

Christ's act was a revelation—revealing what God Himself is doing for His universe and is doing always. The greatest Servant of all is the Divine Father who is carrying on the great powers and processes of this world, giving, by His continuous presence in the world, the power of His Spirit and the power of His service.

2. Jesus, conscious of His Divine dignity, 'took a towel and began to wash the disciples' feet.' If these words give us a true idea of God, they give us also *a true idea of human life*. They teach us that we, like the God we worship, must devote ourselves to service. The importance of having a true conception of the character of God lies, indeed, exactly in this: that we tend to become like the God we worship. Our God is our ideal. If, for instance, we think that God is cruel, we are likely to become cruel ourselves, as witness all the fires of religious persecution. If we think that God exercises arbitrary and despotic power, we shall come to believe with the militarists that might is right. If we believe that God lives a life of ease, secure from all toil and sorrow in a heaven beyond the skies, we shall assuredly hold that the great aim of life is to secure our own personal happiness and salvation for eternity. But if we believe that God is Himself the servant of humanity, that He is the God of the struggler, that even in the central sanctuary of the universe the law holds good, 'from each according to his ability,' why, then, we cannot but believe that for us, too, service is the true ideal of life.

¶ As Buddha put it long ago to certain Brahmans, 'You do well to seek union with God, but you are taking the wrong road. Believe me, you can never manage it merely by reading Scriptures and the like. For God is love, God is unselfishness, God is self-sacrifice. And the only way to become one with Him is to grow loving and unselfish and self-sacrificing too.'

It is in the call to service that there lies the religious appeal to the modern world; service that gives meaning to life, that sweeps a man out of himself into a larger world, and makes him one with the purpose of God, for whom he vaguely longs. The old appeal to men to save their souls from a threatening doom beyond the grave has lost its power. The fact that it was so distinctly an appeal to a man's own self-interest and selfish impulses has killed it. In the light of a growing collective consciousness men can no longer think of individual happiness and salvation, whether in this life or in the next, as the be-all and end-all of religion and of their own being. Let us get rid, then, of sin and selfishness, not that we may escape their penalties but that we may be qualified for service, that we may make our life here and now count for

Christ. What does our churchgoing mean? Is it simply to obtain comfort and help for our own spiritual needs, or is it to be fitted, strengthened, trained, inspired for service? Do we realize what our Christian profession really means, that it is a call to effort, a summons to labour, a challenge to heroic service in all the mighty tasks of the age in which we live? Do we understand that the God revealed in Christ is Himself in the struggle, and that He needs us, our effort, our strength, our will, our life, to help Him lay the foundations of the new and better world that is to be? 'Jesus took a towel and washed his disciples' feet, and said to them: I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you.' To us He says as He said to Peter: 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me'—if we reject the example He set when He washed His disciples' feet, we refuse the relation to our fellows to which it calls us; and this is to reject Him as Master. But when once we obey Him, when we dedicate our lives to the service of God and of humanity, then we shall enter into the real joy and splendour of religion, and on our opened eyes will burst the radiant vision of the King in His beauty.

It were not hard, we think, to serve Him
If we could only see,
If He could stand with that gaze intense
Burning into our bodily sense;
If we might look on that Face most tender,
The brow where the scars are turned to splendour,
Might catch the light of His smile so sweet
And view the marks on His Hands and Feet,
How loyal we should be!
It were not hard, we think, to serve Him,
If we could only see!

It were not hard, He says, to see Him
If we would only serve.
He that doeth the will of Heaven
To him shall knowledge and sight be given.
While for His presence we sit repining
Never we see His countenance shining;
They who toil where His reapers be;
The glow of His smile may always see,
And their faith shall never swerve.
It were not hard, He says, to see Him
If we would only serve![1]

[1] Margaret Seebach.

3. This incident gives us not only a true idea of God and a true idea of life, but *a true idea of service*: it teaches us that we may find opportunities of serving God even in the humblest duties of daily life. True religion recognizes no bisection into secular and sacred; our ordinary everyday work, if it be done with a religious motive, if we do it because we come from God and go to God, is religious work. Surely it was to help us to realize this, to enable us to find a true and living link between our ordinary common duties and the fact of God and of His Christ, that our Saviour took a towel and washed the disciples' feet. Do we not see how inspiring and encouraging it is to us that this lowly act of service is recorded of our Master? If it were only written of Him that He took a cross, we might despair of following in His footsteps. We have not, most of us, the opportunity for doing great things in the service of humanity; and if we had the opportunity, it may be we should lack the spirit and the courage. But if we cannot do great things, at any rate we can do small ones; if we cannot be heroic, we can be faithful; if we cannot take a cross, at least we can take a towel. Towels are needed just as much as crosses in this world of ours, for there are so many weary travellers with aching, dust-stained feet, and so many lowly, humdrum, monotonous tasks that are as necessary to the world's welfare as the heroic exploits of the great leaders of mankind.

¶ That the truest greatness is that which can condescend to the lowliest tasks is strikingly illustrated in this story of the Rev. S. F. Collier, the founder and creator of the Manchester Wesleyan Central Mission. During his official year as President of the Conference he found himself on one occasion with a free evening between two sets of engagements. Returning home he took in his hand a bundle of invitation cards and spent the evening distributing them among the queues outside a Manchester theatre, adding cheery words of invitation to the Mission services. The real Collier shines out in that incident.

There is some little bit of commonplace, ordinary work that we can do for our Church, for our city, for our country, for the spread of His Kingdom through the world. Let us do it with the same mighty consciousness of a Divine motive that inspired Jesus; do it because we too come from God and go to God.

Interpretation Afterwards

John xiii. 7.—'Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.'

Jesus had been looking forward to this occasion with a great desire, and now the disciples are doing their best to ruin it. So He took the towel and the jar of water; and the shamed disciples felt the hands of the Master on their feet. Judas felt them without remonstrance; but it was unbearable for Peter, and in his characteristic fashion he remonstrated. 'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter' was the answer of Jesus.

Here we have one of those apparently casual sayings which have yet a far-reaching significance. The incidental remarks of Jesus to-day become the discovery of the Church to-morrow, and the next day they are at once the despair and the inspiration of the noblest efforts of mankind. He used to speak of Himself as sowing seed on the earth; two thousand years afterwards, we see the seed multiplying its harvests. It was His habit to send out wayside words which were afterwards to give its leading principles to human life. All later history has been the commentary on those words and deeds, and Christianity is better understood to-day than it was in the days of His flesh.

¶ 'There is but one example,' says Lecky, 'of a religion which is not necessarily subverted by civilization, and that example is Christianity. . . . There is, indeed, nothing more wonderful in the history of the human race than the way in which that ideal has traversed the lapse of years, acquiring a new strength and beauty with each advance of civilization, and infusing its beneficent influence into every sphere of thought and action.'

This saying, and the incident which gave rise to it, appeared at the time not only strange and even unseemly, but also quite casual and insignificant. Their significance was waiting for future explanation, and they were passed on to the Church and the world for that disclosure. Looking back, we can see how that simple deed of kindly ministry became first the symbol of all service, and of all human love that purifies and ministers; until it came to be a symbol of the whole person and work of Christ, revealing the meaning of the great mystery of His humiliation and of His supreme service of redemption through sacrifice. It is this expansion which gives to this incident and the words their peculiar value.

The most obvious message of the words is their assurance that Christ's disciples may safely trust the future. It is evident that in all things God counts upon the future and works for the long result. The deliberateness of creation, as the doctrine of evolution shows it moving from the fire and vapour and molten masses of the beginning to the fields of grain and the peopled lands, is an immense gain over the hurried succession of six eventful days. The deliberateness of history is no less remarkable and reassuring, as we trace the slow progress of civilization and the gradual awakening of the social conscience. And the story of the life of Jesus affords abundant confirmation of this heartening message. His absolute trust in the future led to a deliberateness of action, even at critical moments, which often baffled the understanding of His disciples. And when the end was at hand He entrusted Himself and His cause without hesitation to the future.

Christians have caught this trustful spirit toward the future. Hopeful speaks for Christendom when in Doubting Castle he says, 'Who knows but that God, who made the world, may cause that Giant Despair may die, or that at some time or other he may forget to lock us in; or that he may in a short time have another of his fits before us, and may lose the use of his limbs.' These are wise words. Faith sends us on fearlessly through the days and years, trusting to time and taking our unanswered questions forward.

> Still we say as we go,—
> 'Strange to think by the way,
> Whatever there is to know,
> That shall we know one day.'[1]

Yet that assurance is not enough, for the fact is that life seldom fully explains itself. We have a deeper ground of assurance in the great words *what I do*, where faith sees Christ identifying Himself with the providence of God, and trusts to time because it is sure of Christ.

1. The commonest application of the text is to *our ordinary individual experience*, especially of sorrow. Many a sore heart has found com-

[1] D. G. Rossetti.

fort in the assurance that its pain is Christ's doing, mysterious for the present but waiting for an ultimate explanation. The very fact of handing on the explanation to the future is worthy of attention. There will always be much in life that has to be accepted unexplained—much that even our faith in Christ does not explain. Yet one thing He has told us—'I do it.' And that is the last word that can be said to sorrow, for it shifts the burden from our understanding over to the character of Christ. We dwell upon the hardness of circumstances, upon the world and the powers of darkness, upon our own mistakes or follies or sins. These may indeed be the occasions of much suffering; but beyond these, in every hour of sorrow, there still lies the will of God.

¶ There is but one help and one comfort in these trials, that is, to know by whom they are sent. If one knows that nothing can happen to us without Him, one does not feel quite helpless, even under the greatest terrors of this life.[1]

It is equally legitimate for glad hearts to apply the words to their happiness. In very bright hours we are almost afraid to acknowledge our belief in life, and our happy sense of the world. Fears invade, and we ask whether future experience will honour our faith in life; to which Christianity replies that experience worketh not disillusion but hope. In spite of sorrow, life is better than any of its first promises. The fugitive and sudden glories change to a settled peace and sense of well-being. The sense of a 'haunting strangeness in beauty' ripens into the sweet familiarity and homeliness of love. Our faith in life was abundantly justified, and the half was never told at first. Our first delighted moments gave us no hint of the wealth of goodwill from which the Father was drawing, or the kindness of His love. What He is doing we know not at the time, but we understand more fully afterwards.

2. A still wider field opens before us in respect of *service*. The incident in the upper room seemed slight, but it was full of social significance. That day they thought He was only washing the feet of a few disciples. Time has shown that He was freeing slaves, building hospitals, founding charities, inaugurating social science, educating the social conscience of mankind.

[1] Max Müller, *Thoughts on Life and Religion*, 200.

Nothing is more striking than the direction in which the ideals of self-sacrifice have been moving. Beginning with the idea of self-denial for its own sake and for the discipline solely of the person who undertook it, it gradually passed out into more and more useful ideals which measured its value by the help it brought to others. When we claim development for the words of Jesus we mean that the Christian ideals of the service of man must have room to grow, to be original, to adapt themselves to the requirements of each successive age. Thus in each new doctrine of economics, in each new departure in social work, and in each new phase of civilization and philanthropy, men are simply coming to know long afterwards what Jesus did that day when He washed the feet of His disciples.

3. The words are also applicable to the whole of what Christ was then doing for *the redemption of man*. His enemies were bringing the Cross to Him, with very definite and clearly understood meanings of shame and cruelty attached to it. But He took the Cross out of the hands of His enemies, made it His own, and attached to it a totally different set of meanings from that time onward. The Church has known, as none of the Twelve could possibly know that day, what it was that He did.

A similar development may be seen in the understanding of redemption by every individual Christian. When first Christ came to us to hear our confession and to handle our lives we thought we knew what He had done; we may even have framed a pretty complete theological expression of it; but in reality we did not know the richer fullness of meaning which time was to unfold. Afterwards, the soul wonders at the unexpected vistas of experience that open out before it as it advances farther into the fullness of the Christian life. That life is a very wonderful thing, a reticent and unfolding thing. It never discloses itself at the beginning, nor will any period of time suffice to reveal fully all the meaning of the service which Christ rendered to men. It will take a lifetime to explain what He did that day. What He did for us we know not yet, but we shall know more and more of it if we are faithful.

¶ Here is the personal testimony of Dr Meyer, uttered on his seventieth birthday: 'I knew Him as a boy. I trusted Him because of the

testimony of my parents and of my minister. Since then I have wintered and summered with Him, and spent days and nights with Him. I know what He can be when a man sins, and fails, and when the heart is hard and loveless. I now know Him whom once I simply believed, and on this seventieth birthday this is my assurance—that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.' [1]

The Loneliness of Sin

John xiii. 30.—'He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.'

What first strikes us here is the utter loneliness of Judas. No word-painting, however vivid, could give a deeper impression of that than these few words of John: 'He went immediately out: and it was night.' Within, there was light and gladness, and the richest fellowship this world had ever known. For Christ was there, and John was leaning upon Jesus' bosom, and the talk was on high and holy themes that evening. Outside was fierce hostility. Outside was dark. And no man drove out Judas. It was the momentum of his own heart and life that impelled him to choose the darkness rather than the light.

¶ 'I have often wondered,' writes Dr Boreham, 'if some lingering thought of Judas floated across the subconscious mind of Robert Browning when he wrote his *Lost Leader*.

"Just for a handful of silver he left us."

And the analogy by no means ends with the reference to the silver. The poem continues:

"Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!
Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again!"

[1] A. Chester Mann, *F. B. Meyer*, 60.

Both the apostle and the poet evidently design to show us that there is some necessary and essential connection between moral dereliction and moral darkness. Treachery leads to twilight.

"He went out and it was night," says John.

"Just for a handful of silver he left us. . . . Life's night begins . . . the glimmer of twilight," says Browning.'

One continual effect of sin, in every shape and form, in every age and country, is that it intensifies the loneliness of life. We talk of social sins. All sin is ultimately anti-social. We hear of comradeships based upon common vices. All vice in the long run grinds the very thought of comradeship to powder. Sin isolates, estranges, separates; that is its work. It is the task of God ever to lead us to a richer fellowship. It is the work of sin, hidden but sure, to make us lonelier and more lonely till the end. From all that is best, and worthiest, and purest, it is the delight of sin to separate us.

There are three great separations that sin brings, and bringing, makes life a lonely thing.

1. *It separates Man from his Ideal.*—When we have an ideal we can never be quite lonely. When we have the vision beckoning us on, when we have something to live for and to struggle for higher than coin or food, there is a fervour in the common day, and a quiet enthusiasm for to-morrow, that are splendid company for the heart. Even if our ideal be a dream, it is so. In the famous battle between the clans on the North Inch of Perth, rendered immortal in the story of Sir Walter Scott, we remember how the old chieftain Torquil sent out his sons to fight for Hector. And as one son after another fell under the smiting blows of Hal of the Wynd, the old chief thundered out, 'Another for Hector,' and another of his sons stepped forward to the battle. And they were all slain, every one of them, for Hector—and Hector was a coward. Let the ideal be a dream, yet men will fight for it; and, fighting, the heart forgets its loneliness.

But the work of sin has been to separate the world from its ideals—to blot out the vision and to say to men, Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. Sin has no future. It lives in the present of selfish and immediate gratification; and day by day, as we yield ourselves to its rule, it is dwarfing us down to its own mean

destiny, until at last all that we hoped and longed to be is gone, the beckoning hands have vanished, the vision is fled, and we are alone with our own poor selves. Judas had his ideal once, but the devil entered him, and the ideal died out; and from that hour Judas drew apart.

2. *It separates Man from Man.*—There is not a passion, not a lust or vice, but mars and spoils the brotherhood of life, and tends to the loneliness of individual souls. God meant us to be friends. God has established numberless relationships. And God is righteousness and love, and the spirit of righteousness and love inspires them all. Sin has been unrighteous from the first, and shall be cold and loveless till the end. There is no bond so strong but sin will shatter it. It separates the father from his child; it sunders hearts; it creates distances within the home—till the full harmonies of life are lost, and its deep fellowships impossible. Jesus Christ knew that. He saw and felt sin's separating power. And so the Gospel, that rings with the note of brotherhood, centres in Calvary upon the fact of sin. The social gospel is but a shallow gospel, false to the truth and alien from Christ, unless it roots itself in the Divine forgiveness and the inspiring power of the Holy Ghost.

¶ The poet Whittier tells a story of Rabbi Nathan, who long lived blamelessly but fell at last, and his temptation clung to him in spite of his prayers and fastings. He had a friend, Rabbi Ben Isaac, and he felt that his sin had spoiled the friendship. He resolved that he would go to him and speak to him and tell him all. When they met, the two embraced each other; till Rabbi Nathan, remembering his sin, tore himself from his friend's arms and confessed. It was the separating power of sin. But when Rabbi Ben Isaac heard his words, he confessed that he, too, had sinned, and he asked his friend to pray for him as Rabbi Nathan had asked himself. And there in the sunset, side by side, they knelt and each prayed with his whole heart for the other.

> And, when at last they rose up to embrace,
> Each saw God's pardon in his brother's face!

3. *It separates Man from God.*—The most awful separation of all, that reaches the very heart of loneliness, is this: sin separates a man from God. We never can be lonely in God's fellowship. When we see His glory in the world, and trace His handiwork in field and sunset; when we recognize His voice in conscience, when we feel the power of His love in Christ, 'there is society where none intrudes.' We may dwell alone, but we can never be lonely. 'For me to live is Christ,' said the Apostle; and the friendship of God was so real to him, that even in the prison at Philippi he had society.

From the first it has been sin's great triumph to separate the soul from God; and the deepest loneliness of sin is this, that it blinds us to One whom not to see is death, and bars us from the fellowship of Him whose friendship is of infinite value to our hearts. If in the sky and sea, if in the call of duty, if in the claims of men, if in the love of Christ, if in all these we see and hear no God, this is a lonely world. And sin has blinded us, and made us lonely, as the prodigal was lonely when far from his father and his father's home.

¶ The word 'depart' uttered to the workers of iniquity is not an arbitrary one. It voices a law of God that runs through all His moral realm. Sin pushes the prodigal away from his home and friends, his property, his pleasures, his reputation, his character, even his clothes and his food. The law of the word 'depart' has driven him away from everything that was beautiful and of good report. Behold him in his rags and loneliness—feeding swine. Think it not strange, if that man is driven from God and goodness who yields himself to sin. By a changeless law of moral repulsion, he is pushed away. Is it hopeless? Yes, as long as his back is turned toward God. But let him 'come to himself,' let him feel his sin and degradation, let him long for home, for forgiveness, for his Father's face, and the law of changeless love takes hold of him.[1]

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Everyday Living*, 77.

Outward and Inward Separation

John xiii. 33, 36-38.—'Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. . . . Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.'

1. We may notice first of all the considerate announcement of Jesus of the separation from the disciples. He addresses them as 'little children,' a term of endearment common in the First Epistle of John; and we may assume that the disciple echoed the words of the Master rather than put his own mode of addressing his disciples on the Master's lips. It was with deep affection and tender solicitude that Jesus thought of leaving His disciples, as a parent might bid farewell to his immature and dependent children. He had tried to get them to face frankly the necessity of His death, and to understand in some measure the reason why it was so necessary; but they would not take His warnings seriously. Now He strives to arouse their anxiety, to compel their serious thought, to stimulate their inquiry, to lead them step by step to recognize the inevitableness of the separation.

This considerate announcement by Jesus failed to stimulate the intelligence of the disciples. While Peter, who was always too ready for speech, did pause a moment before breaking in with his *curious question*, so that Jesus had time to give the new commandment, yet he did not hesitate about interrupting the Master's discourse with his confession of ignorance. It must surprise us that after the repeated announcements of His approaching passion, in view of all the circumstances showing the hostility of the Jewish rulers, Peter and the others found a difficulty in understanding so simple an allusion as Jesus had just made. It is true that He had on previous occasions withdrawn Himself and His followers from positions of peril, and it may be that, if Peter did recognize the peril, he thought that Jesus was now intimating some such purpose of escape. It is more likely, however, that he and the other disciples were so possessed by their own views and hopes that they did not even consider Jesus' warnings and were quite unable to apprehend the actual situation.

How painful to Jesus must have been this attitude of His disciples! When He wanted and needed their intelligence and sympathy most, they were most estranged from Him in thought and feeling. Personal loyalty of a sort there was; but not the comprehension of His plans and the submission to His purpose which He must have desired. We must not, however, too hastily charge them with an incurable stupidity on the one hand, or a deliberate cruelty on the other. If they had been capable of the one or the other, Jesus would not have chosen them to carry on His work, and they certainly would not after His death have maintained His cause as they did. Theirs is an instance of the tyrannous influence over mind and life of a preconception, especially when that is reinforced by personal preferences. All Jesus' teaching and training had so far failed to bring them over entirely to His point of view as regards His work; and accordingly their own views and plans always come in between Him and them.

This tragedy of misunderstanding has often been repeated in the history of the Christian Church. It has been constantly the painful lot of the Master to be misunderstood by His followers. How far short has Christian theology fallen from apprehending the mind and heart of Christ! And just as ignorance did not restrain Peter's utterance, so, less modest than he, the Church has not merely asked curious questions, but it has made definite declarations in the name of Christ which had no claim to His authority because altogether lacking in His Spirit. As Peter by his question, so has it often interrupted His revelation of Himself to the world.

2. In spite of the dullness of the understanding betrayed in Peter's question, Jesus does not at once abandon His figurative language. He keeps up the likeness of a journey, and, as Peter by his question had concentrated attention on himself, Jesus now directs His speech to Peter alone. While there is a sad warning of an inevitable separation, it is bound up with a comforting promise of an ultimate reunion. At present Jesus clearly holds Peter incapable of fidelity unto death; in the future He as surely

expects such fidelity. Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. While He saw Peter's present weakness, He also foresaw Peter's future renewal in strength. Even although Peter was no more able to lay hold on the comfort than to take to heart the warning in the words of Jesus, yet the utterance is unspeakably precious for Christian faith in all times; for it assures the Christian believer of an unerring judgment not less kind than it is just—a judgment which, recognizing present unworthiness, expects future worthiness; and a judgment, because it is of grace, which can make actual the promise that it foresees in spite of the defect which it now sees.

3. At last Peter realizes what Jesus means. It is towards death that the path of the Master is leading; but so ignorant is he of himself that he at once utters the confident boast, 'I will lay down my life for thee.' Peter mistakes his excited emotions for a constant devotion, and he accepts his own self-confidence as an evidence of his moral and spiritual capacity. Had he not been warned by Jesus, the suddenness of the temptation might have suggested an excuse, if not a reason, for his failure; but it must be observed that he maintained his own estimate of himself in spite of Jesus' warning. His ignorance of himself was an invincible ignorance. Yet before we condemn him, let us examine ourselves whether we do not share his guilt. Failure in Christian living is in many cases due to inability for self-examination and self-estimate. While there is a morbid introspection, which not only brings misery, but even causes weakness, yet on the other hand there is a thoughtless assurance of an adequate faith claiming a sufficiency of grace, which results in disastrous defeat in any moral struggle of unusual and unexpected severity. The man who has maintained his moral respectability under slight temptation fails in moral integrity when the severe trial comes upon him.

¶ I understand clearly how St Peter fell. He placed too much reliance on his own ardent nature, instead of leaning solely on the Divine strength. Had he only said: 'Lord, give me strength to follow Thee unto death!' the grace would not have been refused him.[1]

4. When Peter has faced the situation, and has used plain speech in his confident boast, Jesus is not less direct and simple in His compassionate warning. The form in which the warning is given in St Luke's Gospel gives us a glimpse into the heart of Christ. 'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not: and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren.' Jesus recognized the necessity of a testing of His disciples; He dreaded the possibility of an entire apostasy through failure of faith; He expected the reality of a recovery, and a greater capacity for service as the result. He had averted the grievous possibility, and had secured the comforting reality by His intercession. The personal solicitude which is thus revealed is no less for us than for Peter. In the individual Christian experience, to-day as at all times, there come warnings of peril which, although the voice of Jesus is not heard, come no less from Him, and are no less a proof of a personal solicitude which now as ever is also expressed in a prevailing intercession. The warning may often be less definite in its terms, but it is not less real; and, if conscience is sensitive, it will be sufficient.

5. The thought around which all that has been said may be grouped, is that inward separation is a greater evil, more to be dreaded, than outward. The disciples were so afraid of the outward separation which the death of Jesus would bring that it was needful for Him to make as considerate an announcement as He could. And yet there was a greater evil of which they were quite unconscious, and of which, in his compassionate warning to Peter, He had to make them aware. By holding their own opinions and following their own ways, they had been allowing an inward separation, which made them less ready and fit to face the outward. For Judas that inward separation had gone so far that he was ready to betray. For Peter it had gone so far also that, regardless of Jesus' warnings, ignorant of his own weakness, and confident of his own strength, he was about to deny. For the others, it had gone so far that they all forsook Him, and fled. His death was a disaster to them, the greater because they had refused to remain united with Him in His purpose and expectation regarding His saving sacrifice.

In present-day experience there is a real counterpart of this outward and inward separa-

[1] *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*, 258.

tion. The fellowship of the Church corresponds to the companionship of Jesus with His disciples. Outward separation from the Church seems to many the greatest evil; and it is a great evil, not so much in itself, but because it is generally the sign of the greater evil, separation from Christ Himself. There may be this inward separation when there is not the outward, and without the outward the inward is even more perilous, because it is not recognized and confessed. Again and again a Christian community is startled by the exposure of one of its prominent members, who has been, to use the common phrase, living a double life. While there is a conscious and deliberate hypocrisy, a *play-acting* of religion for worldly ends, yet more often there has been no sense of the unreality of the Christian profession, no feeling of the growing separation from Christ as Saviour and Lord. Many a man who falls before a sudden and strong temptation, and who is harshly adjudged a hypocrite, is no more conscious of his position and peril than was Peter.

¶ A man frequently goes on imagining that the religious teaching with which he has been imbued in childhood is in full force in him, whereas there is not even a trace left of it.

S——, an intelligent and truthful man, told me how he came to stop believing. When he was twenty-six years old he once at a night's rest during the chase followed his old habit, acquired in his childhood, and stood up to pray. His elder brother, who took part in the chase, was lying on the hay and looking at him. When S—— got through and was about to lie down, he said to him: 'So you are still doing these things?'

That was all that was said. And S—— that very day quit praying and attending church. Thirty years have passed since he stopped praying, receiving the Communion, and going to church. Not that he knew the convictions of his brother and had joined them, not that he had decided on anything in his mind, but only because the sentence which his brother had uttered was like the pressure exerted with a finger against a wall which was ready to fall of its own weight; the sentence was merely an indication that where he thought there was faith there had long been a vacant spot, and that, therefore, the words which he spoke and the signs of the cross and the obeisances which he made during his praying were quite meaningless actions. Since he had come to recognize their meaninglessness, he could not keep them up any longer.[1]

While we each one of us may learn from Peter our own need of taking heed to our ways lest we, too, fall as he did, we may also learn from Jesus to be pitiful and kind in our judgment and treatment of others.

The New Commandment

John xiii. 34, 35.—'A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.'

Dean Stanley, preaching from this text in Old Greyfriars' Church, Edinburgh, tells the story of what happened in the manse of Samuel Rutherford at Anwoth more than two hundred years before. A stranger, overtaken by night, sought a lodging under the minister's roof. He was admitted and hospitably entertained; and, it being near the hour of family worship, was invited to join in the service. According to the custom of the day, each member of the household was catechized in turn, and expected to answer questions on the Scriptures. When it came to the stranger's turn he was asked, 'How many commandments are there?' and promptly replied 'Eleven.' His host, surprised and rather shocked at such ignorance, hastened to correct his error, reminding him that there are but ten commandments. But his answer was, 'Have ye never then read, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another"?' The guest proved to be James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, and one of the most renowned Biblical scholars of his day. Rutherford was struck by the answer, and on the following Lord's Day the Archbishop preached to the Presbyterian congregation on that same text—a text never more needed than by both parties in Scotland during those days of strife—'Love one another.'

1. What was there so peculiar in the nature of the commandment that Jesus described it as *new*? It was not His first mention of love as a Christian duty. But the love here enjoined was something other and more than any He had hitherto taught. As the context shows, it is the

[1] Tolstoy, *My Confession* (*Works*, xiii. 5).

circle of the disciples to which the Master is now confining His regard, and it is about their mutual relation that He is now concerned. Their love as brethren (*philadelphia*) is to be, not a contradiction or exclusion, but a concentration and intensification of their love as men for their fellow-men (*philanthropia*).

When Jesus called His disciples to be with Him as His daily companions, He took the first step towards the formation of the Christian society; but the common bond was attachment and devotion to Himself. The withdrawal of His visible presence, and all that it meant for the company of His followers, necessitated the provision of another motive and means of unity, in order that the society not only might be preserved as it had hitherto been, but might even make progress in becoming more completely one. On the one hand, the memory of what Jesus had been, taught, and wrought must be kept vivid, and the expectation of His return in power and glory intense; on the other hand, the hostility of the world around must be dared, and its persecution must be endured in bearing witness to the Risen and the Returning Lord. For so great a trust and so hard a task isolated individuals would have been altogether insufficient; only a society held closely and firmly together could avail for such a burden and such a battle.

While the Christian Church even in the Apostolic Age fell far short of perfect obedience to the perfect teaching and example of Jesus, yet this commandment of love was recognized and obeyed. Not only do we find it echoed again and again in the First Epistle of John and brotherly love represented as the distinctive feature of the Christian community in contrast with the hostile world; but a very practical application was given to it in what has been described as the communism of the Jerusalem fellowship. St Paul wrote the hymn of love in 1 Cor. xiii., which, as the connection with the preceding chapter shows, referred to the fellowship of believers within the Christian Church. In his comparison of the Christian society to a living body, he is not describing an ideal altogether unrelated to actuality, for the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit were realized in a *Koinonia*, a community of life, a participation in common gifts, a mutual service. It was in the communion of the Holy Spirit that the new commandment was fulfilled in the Apostolic Church. As the Church grew in numbers the closeness of the fellowship could not be maintained; and yet as late as the end of the second century (in A.D. 190) Tertullian testifies to the fact that the heathen world bore its unwilling witness, 'See how these Christians love one another.'

¶ In his commentary on Paul's letter to the Galatians, Jerome reports a tradition current in his day, that when St John, the beloved disciple, was very old and unable to walk, and was carried before the congregation in Ephesus, he was wont to repeat again and again the words of Jesus, 'Little children, love one another.' When asked why he said this so many times, his reply was, 'It is the Lord's commandment, and if it only be fulfilled it is enough.'

2. The new commandment not only commends itself to the conscience by its nature, it makes its appeal to the heart by *its reason*. It is the love of Christ which constrains the brotherly love of Christians. In presenting as its motive His own love to His disciples, 'because I have loved you, that ye also love one another,' Jesus reveals His secret. He shows the meaning, worth, and aim of all His dealings with His disciples, of all His teaching and training of them. There was a restraint and reserve in the relation of Jesus to His disciples in His earthly ministry which might lead us to misunderstand its character apart from such revealing moments and utterances. Terms of endearment were seldom on His lips; His disciples would never have thought, as mystics of a later age even dared to do, of searching the Song of Songs for epithets to apply to Him. Yet what a glimpse into His heart is given us in the saying about His disciples: 'Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother' (Mark iii. 34, 35). We shall not understand that saying aright if we suppose that Jesus appreciated natural relationships less than other men. He so spoke because He appreciated spiritual relationships so much more than these have ever been by other men.

Love, then, had been the motive of all His teaching and all His training. He did desire and expect love towards Himself. But the love He sought was no narrow, selfish attachment to His person, but rather a participation

in His purpose, an absorption in His spirit, a submission to the same Divine will as He so constantly and absolutely served. He had loved His disciples, not that they might love Him in any such individualist affection, but that they might love one another, in a social devotion.

3. The reason for the new commandment is the love of Jesus for His disciples; but the love enjoined on them has also its reason; and that is disclosed in *the purpose* of the new commandment stated in the thirty-fifth verse. The love of the disciples to one another will be a sign and proof to all of their relation to Himself. Here Jesus speaks of all men, while in the seventeenth chapter He speaks of the world; while the terms are not strictly synonymous, they are practically equivalent. Accordingly there appears here a thought which runs through the high-priestly prayer. Jesus prays for Himself, for His disciples, for the world. Here He also sets His relation to His disciples, and theirs to one another, in the widest context. In describing the issue of their obedience to the new commandment as showing them to be His disciples, Jesus does not mean merely that the fact of such a relationship to Himself will be admitted; He surely means that in His disciples the revelation of God found in Himself will be continued, and so, through them, men will have the opportunity and the inducement to come into the same relationship with Himself. His love for His disciples, and their love for one another, have as an end the spread of love among all mankind. His individual love and theirs alike have a universal intention: it is not exclusive, but expansive.

4. This new commandment of Jesus is a judgment of, and a challenge to, Christendom. In the early centuries it was obeyed in such measure as to impress even the hostile world; but during many centuries the Christian Church has represented to the world discord rather than unity. What quarrels more bitter have there been than theological disputations? What hatred more fierce than sectarian antagonism? What persecutions more persistent than those of heresy by orthodoxy? Even the memorial feast—symbol not only of the Master's dying love, but also of the disciples' fellowship in remembering His death—has become a bone of contention, and not a bond of union.

¶ 'I will tell you plainly,' said Maurice, 'I find far greater difficulty in this commandment than in all the rest of the discourse. The Church has been trying to construe it for eighteen hundred years, and has succeeded miserably ill.'

How is the discordant Christendom to be brought to harmony? Only in Christ's own way. It is love which alone is a bond in which there is no bondage. It is not a common creed, code, ritual, or polity that can restore unity, which is not uniformity, but admits diversity. It is very doubtful whether one universal ecclesiastical organization would be a benefit to mankind; for it would probably exalt authority, and repress freedom; it would aim at fixity, and shrink from progress. Those who are so possessed by the desire for visible unity in such an organization forget that love can make itself visible to all men apart from any such means. Charity, tolerance, sympathy, co-operation are all possible without uniformity. We must welcome as a Christian brother, and be ready to join in the fellowship of the Lord's Supper with every man who confesses Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. We must go hand in hand with men of all denominations in making our own land in all its institutions and relations thoroughly Christian. We must fight with them shoulder to shoulder in the battle of the Lord against heathenism. The disciples were made loving only by the love of Christ, so the unity of Christendom depends on its union with Him. Only as He abides in His Church, and His Church in Him, will it be one, even as Father and Son abide in oneness.

¶ J. B. Priestley, in his *Good Companions*, has given us one of the best and most popular books of our time. Here we have people whose intellectual opinions are widely different; their educational, social and financial standing as different as could be; but all good companions. The theme running through the whole story is perhaps best expressed by Miss Trant in the dramatized version. After Jess Oakroyd has cleaned what he calls her 'mucky plugs,' she says: 'We are both on the road, and we ought to be friendly.' Oakroyd answers: 'That is the rule of the road, isn't it?' 'That is my idea,' says Miss Trant. How like the spiritual adventure of the Lord Christ who called men and women of all classes and kinds, and bound them together in a great fellowship.

The Cure for Trouble

John xiv. 1.—'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.'

Is there a cure for trouble? Let us look at some of the replies that have been made to this question.

1. The first remedy to be considered is *the Stoic remedy*. The Stoics of old maintained that there is a cure for trouble, that there is a means of healing the cruel aching of the heart, and their name for that cure was Apathy. 'Let all passion, all ardent attachment, die out of your nature,' they counselled. 'Give it all up. Desire nothing; hope for nothing. Accept the universe; take what comes; resign yourself patiently to the inevitable. The way of indifference is the way of peace.' Such was the teaching of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. And there are some persons in our own time who still find themselves attracted by the ancient Stoic wisdom.

It cannot be denied that there is something impressive and even splendid in the Stoic attitude. We cannot but admire the stern fortitude of these people. Nevertheless it is impossible to be satisfied with the Stoic remedy. Why? Simply for the reason that this cure for trouble costs too much. It can, indeed, in a great measure, make us dead to pain; but only by making us dead to joy as well as pain. And we simply cannot afford to pay so high a price. Even to be rid of trouble, we cannot, we dare not, sacrifice all the beauty and the brightness and the rich variety of our life. Let us look on the portraits of the Stoic worthies; observe their settled melancholy, their dreary impassivity, their utter lack of buoyancy and high-spirited enthusiasm; and then ask ourselves seriously whether we wish to become like them. Here, for instance, is Marcus Aurelius, emperor and philosopher, concerning whom a great scholar has written that 'Marcus had as little joy or hope as ever man had who got through a life of work without hanging himself.' Or here is George Eliot, coldly penning the famous letter in which, after comparing faith in God to 'taking opium,' she goes on to say, 'The highest "calling and election" is to do without opium, and live through all our pain with conscious, clear-eyed endurance.' Or here, again, is Matthew Arnold, another prophet of endurance, gazing out on the endless battle of good and evil in the world, and oh! so weary of the strife that goes on and on and on and never issues into victory:

> Creep into thy narrow bed.
> Creep, and let no more be said.
> Vain thy onset! all stands fast!
> Thou thyself must break at last.
>
> Let the long contention cease!
> Geese are swans, and swans are geese.
> Let them have it how they will!
> Thou art tired: best be still.

Love and joy and sympathy and hope and noble ambition are things too precious to be jettisoned, even for the sake of bringing the ship of the soul to anchorage in what Marcus Aurelius calls 'the untroubled peacefulness of a waveless bay.' Let us pass on therefore to another suggested remedy.

2. The second cure for trouble, in default of a better description, may be named the *Pleasure-Cure*. The idea of it is that a man may checkmate pain by plunging over head and ears into pleasurable distraction. 'Stifle your pain with amusements. Forget it in excitements.'

But does the pleasure-prescription answer? Probably it often does in the case of the minor troubles of life. When one is worried or annoyed, often the best thing one can do is to dine out or go to the theatre, and forget the annoyance if only for an evening. After the temporary respite, one is fitter to contend with the obnoxious matter. But the pleasure-cure works only in the case of the lesser troubles; it breaks down irretrievably where the greater troubles are concerned. A mother is told in one day that her two soldier sons have both fallen in the war; a literary man, who gets his living by his writing, discovers that he is doomed to blindness; a young girl is smitten down by an incurable disease in the very hour when a coveted joy seemed about to crown her life; a husband sees his idolized wife fading away beneath his eyes for want of common necessaries which he is too poor to procure for her—will we venture to tell such people to go away and divert themselves, and have some fun, and forget their troubles? We may endeavour by this means to narcotize our suffering, but the strongest pleasures fail to give us lasting allevia-

tion, and the suffering continues with us just the same; only now it has become the suffering of a cowardly and degraded mind, 'which,' as says Romola in George Eliot's novel, 'is the one form of sorrow which has no balm in it.'

3. Let us notice one other prescription. If we cannot find a cure for trouble in apathy or in pleasure, may we find it, perhaps, in *Work*—in doing the daily duty, in carrying out the allotted task conscientiously and strenuously, in fulfilling the engagement? Is work the way to peace? That was the conviction of the great novelist, Emile Zola. On one occasion Zola addressed to the students of Paris a remarkable oration in which he spoke of his own work and of the consolation it had brought to him. 'I,' said he, 'have had but one faith, one strength—work! What has sustained me was the enormous labour I set myself. . . . How often in the morning have I sat down to my table . . . tortured by some great sorrow, physical or mental! And each time—in spite of the revolt my suffering has caused—after the first moments of agony, my task has been to me an alleviation and a comfort.' And he continued, 'From the time one accepts the task, and from the time one begins to fulfil it, it seems to me that tranquillity should come even to the most tormented.' And Mr E. F. Benson has claimed that in seasons of deep depression 'the one anchor is employment, and the absolute necessity is behaving in a normal manner. It does not seem worth while; it seems, too, all but impossible, but it is not quite impossible, and there is nothing which is so much worth while.'

It is perfectly true, of course, that very arduous and protracted work, engaging our powers, and exhausting us, and tiring us right out, may render us for a moment and in a measure insensible to trouble. But work is not genuinely remedial. No wounds of the human spirit are really healed by work. No fevers of mind or soul are really cured by work. We may find in work a sedative, a soporific, in our agony; but work by itself cannot mend a broken heart, or soothe our griefs and miseries into the blissfulness of pure content.

4. So far, then, we have failed to find, by human ingenuity, an effectual cure for trouble. But let us now at last turn back to One who is named the Good Physician. What remedy has He to offer? 'Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.' This is the *Religion-Cure*, and somehow it seems to go down to the very root of the matter. It is no superficial palliative; it grapples with and subdues the very essence of our distemper.

Let us observe for a moment the terms of this prescription. First, 'ye believe in God.' To be certain of God, to be certain that God cares for us, to be certain that God knows all about our suffering and is controlling it to the working out of a wise and beneficent purpose, to be certain that, even in the most desperate circumstances and situations, we are still grasped and sustained by a Providence that we can absolutely trust—this is to be mailed against adversity. In the strength of such faith in God, we can confront without alarm 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune'; we can believe, though we cannot prove, that 'all is right that seems most wrong'; we can echo the words of Pascal, 'Thou alone knowest what is expedient for me. . . . Give to me or take away from me, only conform my will to Thine'; we can say with General Gordon, 'My Friend is with me, and I am quieted with the knowledge of His rule'; we can sing with the Quaker poet:

> In all the maddening maze of things,
> And tossed by storm and flood,
> To one fixed state my spirit clings—
> I know that God is good.

¶ When the Cardinal Legate from Rome had an interview with Luther at Augsburg, he said to him furiously—'The Pope's little finger is stronger than all Germany. Do you expect your princes to take up arms to defend *you*? I tell you, No! And where will you be then—where will you be then?' And Luther answered, 'Where I am now: in the hands of Almighty God.' And it was the same Luther who used often to say to Melanchthon in the stormy days of the Reformation—'Come, Philip, let us sing the forty-sixth psalm, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."'

¶ Here is the last entry in Bishop Hannington's pocket diary, written just before he was led out to death: 'I can hear no news, but was held up by Ps. 30 which came with great power. A hyena howled near me last night, smelling a sick man, but I hope it is not to have me yet.' That is not stoicism; it is the quiet of a mind that is stayed on God.

'Ye believe in God'—that first. But let us not forget the second clause of Christ's prescription. 'Believe also in me.' Jesus our Lord, Jesus Himself—is He not at once the example and the guarantee of a heart untroubled in the midst of trouble? He came and lived this troubled life of ours. He drank of the cup of sorrow. He experienced to the full the tribulations of our condition. And all this, that He might show us how to triumph over trouble, and miraculously change 'the bitter water of our affliction into the wine of joy and gladness.' The Man of Sorrows offers Himself as Sorrow's Healer. And as we look on Him, and imitate Him, and conform ourselves to His image, do we not learn to meet our troubles with the same heavenly mind? We share His unfaltering trust in the love of God, His willing and cheerful acceptance of the all-righteous Will of God, His eagerness to devote Himself at any cost to God's service; and sharing so much, we share also His happy experience of inward peace in the midst of outward agitation, of wonderful, imperturbable, unruffled calm.

¶ Do you remember Carlyle's magnificent apostrophe to Marie Antoinette, led bound to her execution? 'Far as the eye reaches, a multitudinous sea of maniac heads: the air deaf with their triumph-yell! The Living-dead must shudder with yet one other pang; her startled blood yet again suffuses with the hue of agony that pale face, which she hides with her hands. Is there, then, no heart to say, God pity thee? O think not of these; think of Him whom thou worshippest, the Crucified, who also treading the wine-press alone fronted sorrow still deeper; and triumphed over it, and made it holy; and built of it a "Sanctuary of Sorrow" for thee and all the wretched!'

It is only in religion, only in belief in God and in the Christ of God, that we discover 'the peaceful secret'; it is only when we cast ourselves on the everlasting Love and Mercy that we find rest unto our souls. Let us test for ourselves the mighty efficacy of this remedy. Troubles must come, and pressures must come, and sorrowful days must come to all of us; but the faith which the Lord commends can keep us steady and strong and tranquil in the very midst of trouble, and enable us to go our way with the joyous confidence of the victor who has striven often and suffered much but in the end has conquered.

'Let not your heart be troubled,'
Never was voice so sweet,
Never was look more kingly,
Nor assurance more complete.
'Let not your heart be troubled,
Ye believe in God Most High,
And one with God the Father,
Equal with Him am I.'

The Continuity of Life

John xiv. 2.—'In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.'

THE belief in a future life is a belief not peculiar to Christianity. In fact, 'I believe in the immortality of the soul' is not essentially a Christian pronouncement at all. The Christian pronouncement is something more concrete and decisive. As we have it in the Apostles' Creed, the Christian affirmation is, 'I believe in the resurrection of the body.' That is to say, those who had learned from Christ had the daring to believe that, after the apparent triumph of death over us all, it was no mere vague and intangible essence which survived; it was the human being, the total personality, the recognizable man or woman, who passed into the nearer presence of God!

1. What is the Christian conception of the future life? What light do we have, either in revelation or in reason, upon the conditions of future being?

In relation to the life beyond death, the Bible literally reflects all the main stages of human thought on the subject. If we consult the earlier portion of the Old Testament we shall find that there is absolutely no conception of immortality at all. There is no hint of any such belief in the laws of Moses. But as the story of Judaism proceeds, this faith begins to come to light. We discern its dawn in the prophets, and it is carried much farther in the Jewish Apocalyptic literature. At the time when Jesus lived, all the Jewish parties, except the Sadducees, believed in the life beyond death.

The particular view about the nature of future life was something like this. At death the body is placed in the grave, and the soul sleeps until the day of resurrection, when at one moment the bodies of the dead, re-animated by the awaken-

ing souls, will rise from the grave and come before God for judgment. This conception took a great hold upon early Christians, and as a matter of fact it determined the mode of Christian burial. The bodies of the dead were no longer burnt, according to the Roman custom, but were laid to rest in catacombs. The burial ground was called a dormitory, a place of sleep, which is also the meaning of our word cemetery. When the day of resurrection came, it was anticipated that the dead would come forth from the graves.

But there is another view of the resurrection of the dead, one derived from Jesus Himself, though He sometimes spoke in the terms of current beliefs. He said to the thief upon the Cross: 'This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' He drew the picture of a continuity of life beyond death with no interval of sleep. So at death we put off our mortal bodies to be given at once bodies suited to our new conditions of existence. There is no waiting for life beyond until a fixed day; those who pass through the gates of death live at once.

2. Jesus Himself told us remarkably little about the details of the life beyond death. Perhaps the most suggestive reference of all is this saying that in the Father's house are many mansions, and that if it were not so, He would have told us. That means, primarily, that as this world is one of the mansions, so there are others beyond death, and that the riches of life, so far from being exhausted, have only just begun to reveal themselves when we pass from this world. Yet is there not something more than that in this most suggestive phrase? Jesus did not say that there were two mansions in the Father's house, life here and life beyond. He said there were many mansions, suggesting to our minds that beyond life here are many stages of life, experiences which fit in with each other, and lead out of each other like rooms in the same house. Or, to put that thought in another way. In the life beyond, as in life here, there are infinite possibilities of growth. We believe there will be new work to do, larger heights to gain, and that the spirit of that life beyond will be wonderful in its joy beyond all powers of description. It will be more than rest. In God's economy of life, rest is always the prelude to labour, and the heart of life's joy is growth and progression.

¶ To look upon the soul as going on from strength to strength; to consider that she is to shine for ever with new accessions of glory, and brighten to all eternity, that she will be still adding virtue to virtue, and knowledge to knowledge, carries in it something wonderfully agreeable to that ambition which is natural to the mind of man. Nay, it must be a prospect pleasing to God Himself, to see His creation for ever beautifying in His eyes, and drawing nearer to Him, by greater degrees of resemblance.[1]

3. 'I go to prepare a place for you.' Now, preparation means forethought—the endeavour to meet the needs of those for whom we are making preparation. And it is natural to look back to the amazing care with which this first resting-place of the earth was prepared for us. Everything that could delight the eye and all that could please the ear were here waiting for us. And what He did for this earth He is doing for the New Earth, and as body, mind, and spirit have found everything ready here, so spirit, mind, and body will find all they need there.

¶ Our Lord speaks of 'preparing a place for us,' and we begin to understand what this implies: He is going to see us out, and to welcome us in. That does not mean bare boards and unlighted rooms and unspread tables: it means the lamp's flash and the trumpet's peal and the Master's lips aglow; it means a table spread before us in the presence of finally discomfited enemies—before us and Him—and the Lord's own house in which to abide for ever.[2]

To prepare a 'place' we say, because we simply cannot conceive a state of existence that is independent of time and place. The New Testament teaches that the soul, released from these present bodies, is clothed upon with a spiritual body, and whatever this may be—of whatever tenuity—it must occupy space. This fact does not commit us to any absurd theory of a heaven situated locally above the sky—a theory based on the old notion that the earth was the centre of the universe.

But, while Heaven is probably a place, yet there is this amount of truth in the old antithesis which called it merely a state, that Heaven is quality of life. Where it is we can only guess; what it is we can clearly and definitely conceive on the strength of the

[1] Joseph Addison. [2] J. Rendel Harris.

spiritual truths of Christianity. It means fuller and untrammelled communion with Christ Himself, fellowship with God, knowledge of Him, enjoyment of His presence and love, assimilation to His character. All these things go to make up the Father's House. But the life to which we are thus introduced is not a mere merging of the individuality in the Divine, as Buddha taught, and Plotinus, and many dreamers besides. On the contrary, the Christian gospel presents the future life as the experience of a self-conscious being, in whom personality lasts and becomes perfected, and it teaches us to believe in a God who holds communion with men—a communion that by its very nature is eternal.

It is foolish to expect that the mere discipline of death will exalt all the people of God to one level of attainment, and that the highest point of perfection they are destined ever to reach. Jesus plainly indicated that rewards differ for different individuals, and St Paul declares that each shall receive according to his own labour. All have learnt to place God's will absolutely first, and therefore, if it is asked whether such variety of resting-places may not produce discontent in the lower spheres, there is no doubt what the answer must be. They will what God wills.

¶ 'Tell me,' Dante said to Piccarda, whom he was able to recognize in spite of her transfigured beauty, 'tell me ye whose blessedness is here, do ye desire a more lofty place, to see more, and to be more loved by God?' She first gently smiled, then answered so joyous that she seemed to glow with love's first flame: 'Brother, the power of love so rules our will, it makes us long for naught but what we have, and feel no other thirst. . . . That we should be thus rank by rank throughout this realm ordained, rejoices all the realm e'en as its King who draws our wills in His.'

4. Shall we recognize our friends in Heaven? The Christian conception of Heaven is always that of a community, and Jesus Himself conceives it as a Home where there is a common Father, and where His people will know Himself and be with Him. Therefore, it seems as if the relationship between those who have loved one another on earth must be even closer and deeper than ever, since each is then in far deeper and closer relation to God. Here our faculties of sympathy and love are limited in many ways, and their expression is curtailed; there every such obstacle will forever be removed. Heaven is society, a city, a church, a kingdom, a communion. 'Ye are come unto the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus.' Not only shall we know our own friends there, but we shall know also in the future life those whom we have never seen on earth.

¶ Streeter says, 'No changes in outward form will prevent immediate recognition of our friends; and not only of them, but of those also whom we have never known in this life. Elijah and St Paul will not look at all like the portraits of them in stained-glass windows; but we shall be able to recognize them none the less.'

Above all, we shall enjoy the supreme blessing of knowing Jesus—the presence and fellowship of our glorified Lord. To those who knew Him on earth He brought a new conception of life—a new relationship with God. To know Him in Heaven will be to experience that in an infinitely larger and more glorious measure. Not that the visible presence of Christ will dazzle the eyes or paralyse the thought. Still as of old He comes to His disciples, saying: 'It is I, be not afraid.' For, as George Macdonald has beautifully expressed it, 'The world beyond the gates of death is, I suspect, a far more home-like place to those who enter it than this world is to us.'

Return, Reception, and Reunion

John xiv. 3.—'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.'

1. It is clear that what Jesus here promises is a *return* to, a *reception* of, and a *reunion* with, His disciples; but what each of them will mean must be determined by the standpoint we assume—the eschatological or the experimental. Is this a hope which the believer may cherish in view of his death, or is it an experience which may here and now be claimed by Christian faith? Or are these alternatives not mutually exclusive? Has the promise of Jesus both a present and a future reference? If the Father's

house embraces earth as well as Heaven, if the life now as well as the life beyond may be an abiding in God in the companionship of Jesus Christ, then we may give the experimental interpretation without excluding the eschatological, as in the present life begins the process which the future life brings to its consummation.

(1) The *return* of Jesus to the disciples did take place when they became conscious of His presence with them, and His power upon them. We may assert as an historical fact that the certainty that Christ lived and reigned was seized and held fast by the faith of the primitive community. It was only when this conviction had taken full possession of their minds that the disciples were filled with the holy enthusiasm of Pentecost. The Lord's return was the condition of the Spirit's presence and power in the Christian Church. In the growth in grace of believers, in the progress of the gospel, in the victory of the Christian Church over the Roman Empire, faith could recognize His constant coming. To the Christian believer to-day Christ often comes in the gracious influences of the Christian home, so that the human heart becomes the Divine home slowly without any sense of the change: in repentance, faith, conversion, He comes to others. For the Christian Church also there are returns of the Lord in mercy as in judgment, in assurances of the sufficiency of His grace, or penitences for failure in faith and duty.

¶ While scientists recognize in geological periods 'a persistent progress of life to a higher plane,' they also recognize in 'the life of species sudden fundamental advances,' 'expression points,' in which the underlying inscrutable force conspicuously declares itself. What are the wonderful revivals which periodically gladden the Church but such 'sudden fundamental advances,' 'expression points,' in which the Spirit of God demonstrates Himself in the kingdom of souls in such a manner as to excite the attention and wonder of mankind? [1]

(2) If we can thus conceive the return of Christ, the *reception* of the disciples unto Himself surely means the process by which the believer comes to clearer knowledge, deeper devotion, and fuller obedience. As the mind receives more fully His truth, as the heart gives richer response to His love, as the life is more thoroughly consecrated to His service, He is taking the soul to Himself and making it His own. Such a process of reception may be witnessed in the Apostolic Age. For instance, we can trace in the Acts of the Apostles a progress in the apprehension even by the Apostles of the truth about the person and the work of Jesus as the Christ of God. The Jerusalem community did not at once understand the purpose of Christ regarding the Gentiles, and it was only slowly that it was made willing to admit Gentile and Jew on equal terms. Throughout the history of the Christian Church this receiving of the Church by Christ has been going on. Whenever a truth of the gospel is freed from the errors which hitherto have hidden it, and hindered its acknowledgment, whenever a new duty in human relationships is recognized as demanded by obedience to Christ, whenever spheres of influence till then neglected are claimed for the Spirit of God, whenever the borders of the Kingdom of God are widened, the change may be described as Christ receiving the Church unto Himself. And as the Church is thus received, through the testimony or influence of the Church the world will be received by Christ unto Himself.

(3) The *reunion* with Christ, which is the result of the return of, and reception by, Christ, is expressed in terms of space, 'that where I am, there ye may be also.' But that does not confine us to any local interpretation; for throughout this discourse Jesus uses terms of space to describe spiritual conditions. He is going where the disciples cannot now follow Him. He is going to the Father. He is for them the way to the Father. To be where Christ is, then, need not mean only to be in the same place as He is. To be near Him for a soul unlike Him would be not heaven, but hell. What the reunion means is our uninterrupted communion with Him through an entire consecration to Him, and a complete resemblance. Such a reunion is not effected in a moment, but is a process, for too many Christians so gradual as to be almost imperceptible. This, however, is the goal of the Christian course, and its constant characteristic. A man is a Christian as he lives with Christ, and Christ lives with him. There may be genuine Christian experience and sincere Christian character where this sense of personal communion is not developed, but the typical Christian life is the life of oneness in fellowship with Him. To be with Christ is to be where God as Father is revealed, where

[1] W. L. Watkinson.

truth is disclosed, where love abounds, where holiness reigns, where peace abides, where joy is full, where death is not, and where eternal life is. This is the good which Christ offers the soul in Himself.

2. While the general reference of the text may be to *the spiritual process* thus described, there is also a special reference to death and the hereafter, for Jesus uttered these words of comfort and cheer, help and hope, to disciples who were troubled in heart because of His departure from them in His death. Because Jesus thus returns to His disciples, receives them, and is reunited to them in the present spiritual experience, we may boldly venture to believe that He is to the soul which trusts Him the same in death as in life, hereafter as now.

We cannot now conceive the general resurrection in the literal form in which the Apostolic Age anticipated it. Even if the fulfilment of God's purpose of grace in the world should be marked by some cosmic transformation, some Divine manifestation which we cannot now imagine, we cannot think of our beloved dead as in an unconscious condition, as reduced in vitality until their personality is restored to them fully in the end of this age. It is reasonable to suppose that the fruition of heaven's perfection, glory, blessedness waits the fulfilment of God's purpose on earth. As the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews believed that the believers under the old covenant were not made perfect apart from the believers under the new, concerning whom God had provided some better thing, so we may believe that the world's redemption will complete even the life of Heaven. It is reasonable also to suppose that there is a moral and a spiritual continuity between this life and the next, and that physical death does not and cannot in a moment complete the development of the soul in truth, goodness, and love. While we may well believe that with this earthly life the occasions for, and temptations to, sin will cease, yet even a sinless development may be progressive.

¶ There is a prophetic verse in *In Memoriam* which speaks of progress in the future life:

> Rapt from the fickle and the frail
> With gather'd power, yet the same,
> Pierces the keen seraphic flame
> From orb to orb, from veil to veil.

Giving due weight to these two considerations, namely, that the completion of each soul depends on the fulfilment of God's purpose in the world, and that there will be room for, and need of, progress in the future life, we may for our comfort and hope apply this text to the believer's experience of death. When he descends into the Valley of the Shadow, while no human helper or comforter can go with him —and is not this human impotence sorrow's crowning sorrow in the experience of bereavement?—the darkness will be turned to day; for the Conqueror of death will draw nearer than ever, and His closer companionship will sustain the soul.

Our love cannot but linger about the portal of death, and try to follow the loved ones into the new life. How many must be the changes, how keen the surprises, how great the wonders! But surely the new experiences, whatever they may be, will be no strain to the soul, for all will be blessed as Christ's reception of His beloved unto Himself. There will be no dread of mystery, no shrinking from the unknown, for the truth, love, and grace of Jesus Christ will then be the soul's welcome; and life's best experiences will be continued through death unto the life eternal. The fellowship begun on earth with Him will then endure, uninterrupted by the soul's failure to exercise the faith which claims His grace, unbroken by the intrusion of sin, and unshadowed by the darkness of doubt or fear, pain or grief. It cannot enter into our heart to conceive all that Christ is preparing for those that love Him; but such imaginations are surely not vain, but are love's abundant provision for love's extreme necessity.

¶ Did you ever read a letter written by Lewis Carroll to the children who loved 'Alice'? He describes a child wakening from a frightening dream, to find a mother's hand drawing aside the curtains and letting in the sunshine of a spring morning, and he goes on to say that death is like that, a morning when God's hand shall draw aside the curtains and we shall see the Sun of Righteousness. That is all it is, just sleeping to wake where everything that frightened and vexed us will be finished with.[1]

[1] O. Douglas, *Pink Sugar*, 264.

The Way, the Truth, the Life

John xiv. 6.—'Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.'

The most direct answer which our Lord made to the question, 'Whither goest thou?' was, 'I go my way to him that sent me.' The goal of man's life is the Father, and the only course which can bring men to that goal is Christ, and that for two reasons: because He, as the truth, brings God to men by His revelation, and because He, as the life, brings men to God by His redemption. The words, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life,' is a Hebraic mode of expression, and in our English fashion of speech would be expressed, 'I am the true and the living way.' He is the way as being the truth, and the truth as being the life. The three are not meant to be separated.

¶ As Thomas à Kempis puts it,

> Without the Way there is no going,
> Without the Truth there is no knowing,
> Without the Life there is no living.

The way suggests a road running on to a goal, life's growing purpose, God's plan for each one of His children.

Part of the meaning may be expressed in this way that every man has a purpose and a meaning in the world. We are not wandering aimlessly—at least we ought not to be. We are part of a divine system, and we, like our Master, are to go our way back to Him that sent us into the world. And the best way, according to which all right human action must be framed, is revealed in the life of Christ. The way to the Father is the way of absolute obedience, the way of self-sacrificing love. It is the way of Christ. 'No man cometh unto the father but by me.'

The revelation of the way, as the life of Christ and the life in Christ, kept the Apostles marching straight onward in a difficult age when old religions and customs were perishing around them, and when amid the pulverizing of ancient traditions and forms of society virtue seemed more embarrassed and wickedness more shameless than at ordinary times. There were illusions even in their own beliefs, such as their expectation of the return of Christ to earth. But so long as the Church could say, 'We have the mind of Christ,' so long as the law of Christ and the law of love were held fast by Christians, they went straight forward, and on the only true way they went forth conquering and to conquer. They knew little enough about the future. Their historical horizon was narrowly circumscribed. They knew not the goal, but they knew the way.

1. *The Way.*—This way is not a code of rules or laws; not a document, or a theology, or an ethical system; it is a personality like our own. It is not a theory, but a concrete actuality in the shape of a living person. It is not a track marked out on a chart, but the very road itself. It is easy to see the advantage of this. When called upon to perform a certain task instructions how to do it is nothing like so good as to see someone else actually do it first. To His chosen people God gave a law, but to us He has given a Way embodied in an actual personality, and this personality becomes Guide, Standard, Interpreter of life to us.

¶ '"Sometimes the track is difficult," he [Dan Crawford] wrote. "A native guide was leading me along a new trail [on the way down to Elizabethville] to avoid a detour of one day. Being a bit dubious of his direction I asked this proud-as-punch guide *where* we were going. 'The Way?' said he, smiling patronizingly. 'Want to know the Way? *I* am the Way!' said he, as he pointed proudly to his breast, where the hidden knowledge was locked up. I took my text from that; sat down with him in the forest on . . . a fallen tree, and told him . . . of the Blessed One who could truly say, '*I* am The Way that never was a way until I passed along it.'"'[1]

But let us remember that Jesus is not the Way merely in the sense of His being our example and model. He is our Guide, not outside of us conducting us along the road He travelled, but within us showing us *our* way. The trouble with the Jewish Law was that it was a fixed code of regulations; it had no elasticity; and life is so various and incalculable an affair, and the world we live in so tangled a place, that no fixed code can ever cover it. What we need is some personal inward guidance which will enable us to carry ourselves rightly in any situation that may arise. That is what Jesus Christ becomes by His indwelling. But He is

[1] G. E. Tilsley, *Dan Crawford*, 575.

even more than that. He is not only a Light to show the way but the power to travel it. It were an ill service indeed to us to show what step we should take and leave us impotent to take it. But Jesus gives us power as well as guidance. That is a fact we are far too apt to forget. It is not so much cowardice, as a genuine sense of weakness, which leads us to quail and retreat before the exacting demands of the law of Christ. 'It is high,' we say, 'I cannot attain unto it,' and that is true so long as we have only our own powers to rely upon. When we come to the highest reaches of moral obligation we feel that it is beyond us. But it is not beyond the man who has the strengthening power of Christ.

¶ Buddha could point his disciples to a way and say, 'Walk ye in it.' Socrates could tell his pupils of a truth and say, 'Cleave ye to it.' But He who stands above all earthly guides and teachers, He who though He was dead is alive again for evermore, is able to pour His own life into the spirits of foolish and selfish men until they are aware of a mighty Presence entering and possessing and transforming the depths of their being.[1]

2. *The Truth.*—'I am the Truth'—not I bear witness to the truth, or I teach you the truth. No man can know God in any full and intimate sense except through Christ. He is the Word of God—the articulate expression of the thought of God. He is the Light of the world, dispelling the darkness and making all things clear. No doubt many precious truths with regard to God had been revealed before Christ appeared. To these He did full justice; He came not to destroy but to fulfil. Yet the truth, before His day, had been fragmentary, heterogeneous, obscure. It was like the broken lights of the solar spectrum as shown through a prism, not yet fused into one clear radiance. But at last God spoke to man not 'in sundry portions and in divers manners through the prophets,' but 'by his Son, the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person.'

¶ A Bahaist lady came from the West and was speaking to an Indian audience in Gujerat with a Parsee gentleman as an interpreter. She said to the audience that when the sun arose it arose in the east and shone through window after window in the house. Each window represented a religion and each window thought that it had the light. Jesus was a window and Buddha was a window, but there was One Sun shining through them all. The Parsee interpreter added this to his interpretation: 'I beg to differ from the lady. Jesus is not just a window. He is the Sun shining into these other windows.'[1]

Christ speaks directly from God. His words ring true. What He says has authority. 'All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.' His parables are revelations of God's truth. His mighty works, in one of their aspects, are 'signs' or illustrations of truth. Even His great sacrifice, while it is much more, is the profoundest explanation of God ever given, the evidence of God's love for the world. The Spirit He promises to His disciples is a Spirit of truth, a Spirit who shall teach, and testify, and bring to remembrance, and guide them into all truth.

3. *The Life.*—Christ is the Way for a yet more significant reason—because He is the Life. Our main business here is not to know, but to live; and truth is valueless until translated into action. St Paul's first cry after his conversion, 'Who art thou, Lord?' is quickly followed by a second, 'What wilt thou have me to do?' Truth and life have a mutual influence; if truth can inspire, action can illuminate. Many of the Church's greatest mistakes, much of her intolerance and persecution, have come from a one-sided conception of religion as truth to the neglect of life. Our Lord never said, like Socrates, that knowledge was virtue. Men, to Him, were not only blind, but sick; not only in error, but in sin; and He must, therefore, give them health as well as light, life as well as truth. Hence, to know Christ as the Truth is not enough; we must find Him as the Life. The Way is a way to *life* in God. 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' All the work of Christ was directed to this end. The aim of His great sacrifice was not so much to show God to man, as to give God to man, and to bring man to God.

¶ As Godet tersely puts it, 'The truth is God *revealed* in His essential nature—that is to say, in His holiness and in His love; the life is God *communicated* to the soul, and imparting to it holy strength and perfect blessedness.'

[1] T. H. Darlow.

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Mount*, 107.

Christianity is Christ. It is a way of life, and He is that way. It is the truth about human destiny, and He is that truth. It is the offer of life lived in the sunshine of eternal love, and He is that life. To know that is to know God, and every need is satisfied in that one word.

Thou art the Way!
All ways are thorny mazes without Thee;
Where hearts are pierced, and thoughts all aimless stray:
In Thee the heart stands firm, the life moves free;
Thou art our Way.

Thou art the Truth!
Questions the ages break against in vain
Confront the spirit in its untried youth;
It starves, while sifting poison from the grain:
Thou art the Truth!

Thou art the Life!
All ways without Thee paths that end in death;
All life without Thee with death harvest rife;
All truths dry bones, disjoined, and void of breath:
Thou art our Life![1]

The Truth

John xiv. 6.—'Jesus saith unto him, I am . . . the truth.'

1. Different nations have had different ideas about truthfulness. The ancient Persians boasted that they taught their boys three things—to ride, to shoot, and to speak the truth. This is very like the old-fashioned English gentleman's ideal, and very unlike the ancient Greek way of looking at things, which made truth consist in clear thinking and freedom from cant or prejudice. The Jews valued truthfulness in speech almost as much as we do. 'He that hath used no deceit in his tongue' and 'speaketh the truth from his heart' can alone be accepted by God. But the word for truth in the Old Testament really means what is fixed and stable, what can be depended on, what never deceives or disappoints us. It means loyalty to obligations, honest dealing, and justice. In this sense it is frequently combined with 'mercy,' which is a part of justice.

[1] Elizabeth R. Charles.

We may say that the dominant idea of truth in the Old Testament is fidelity. 'The truth' is that which never deceives or betrays or disappoints us. The true man is a man whom you can trust. The true God is the God who keepeth covenant and showeth mercy to thousands. This is the Hebrew way of reflecting on life. Not being, but acting, was what interested them. They did not speculate about ultimate reality; they did not ask, 'What is truth?' as the inquiring Greeks were always doing. They were content to trace God's faithfulness in their history, and they admired greatly the steady, trustworthy character, the man who sweareth unto his neighbour and disappointeth him not, though it were to his own hindrance.

2. In the New Testament, this fine old idea of truth as faithfulness is preserved, but the word is charged with a richer meaning, especially in St John and in St Paul's Epistles. If 'faithfulness' is the nearest equivalent to the word translated truth in the Old Testament, 'reality' is the nearest equivalent to the word translated truth in the New Testament. When John says, 'The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,' he opposes the law to grace as precept to freedom, and he opposes the law to truth as figure to substance. The law was the shadow of good things to come, the gospel was the truth or reality of them. 'The truth' has quite as much to do with conduct as with belief. 'Ye have not so learned Christ, if so be that ye have heard him and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off the old man and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.' The truth as it is in Jesus includes this moral transformation.

Again in the Revelation, when the writer ends a terrible list of criminals with, 'and all liars,' he means, 'and all other false men'—the vices enumerated are all sins against the truth. So in the last chapter, 'without are dogs and sorcerers and murderers, and whosoever loveth and doeth a lie.' The murderers and other evil men are those who 'do a lie.' The man who does such things is a liar, because his life is a lie. It is a lie in two ways: because he betrays and wrongs his fellow-men, and because he lives himself in an atmosphere of delusion and error, and never knows or sees the truth, the reality. Thus the New Testament brings together the two ideas of truth—the Hebrew and the Greek. In

Christianity truth means that which never deceives or betrays, and it also means that which is real—it is almost the same as light or knowledge. Christ Himself is the Truth, in both senses. He never deceives or disappoints us, and He is the Light that lighteth every man as it comes into the world. We may take it, then, that when St Paul bids us 'be true men,' adding, 'in love,' he means all that the Old Testament writers meant by truth, and something more besides. He means, 'Be faithful,' and 'Be real.' Be honest with others, and with yourselves. Act honestly, and think honestly. In this full and rich conception of truth we have one of the deepest and most precious parts of the Christian revelation. The two sides are brought together, never more to be sundered.

3. Let us see some of the consequences of dissociating these two things.

We have had during the last century a number of investigators—scientists and metaphysicians—who have devoted themselves to the intellectual or experimental search for truth, and nothing but the truth. Many of these have been men of the highest character. Others—a small minority—have been pitiable warnings that the intellect is not the whole man. A man may have all the intellectual virtues and yet be the kind of man whom you cannot trust to shrink from telling a lie, to pay back a loan, or to respect his own body and those of others. The New Testament calls him a liar, as the Hebrew prophets would have called him. Such a man may reach scientific truth, but he can never reach reality, which has the stamp of truth on two sides, not on one only.

¶ The famous German philosopher, Schopenhauer, was a man of a fearlessly honest and penetrating intellect, if ever there was one; but his philosophy seemed to have no influence upon his character. In private life he was selfish, spiteful, and cowardly to an almost incredible degree, and given to coarse vices. Naturally, he was the unhappiest of men, and is the classical exponent of pessimism. In a sense, no doubt, he was a brilliant seeker after truth, but he never found reality. His intellectual life never found its proper expression in his conduct; his life was untrue, unreal. Such a career is an object-lesson in the meaning of truth.

On the other hand, we meet a great many worthy people whom we may trust implicitly not to tell us lies, or rob us, and whose private life is free from any stain, who nevertheless have not the most rudimentary notions of what intellectual honesty means. They have no reasoned convictions, only a miscellaneous assortment of ready-made opinions and prejudices, which they hold without apparently caring much whether they are true or not. They live on the surface of life, using their often very keen wits to perfect themselves in the art of social or business success; they are adherents of movements or popular crazes which they have never investigated or tried to understand; in short, they are honest and truthful, but not real, not 'true' in the New Testament sense. They live among the ripples and wavelets, and broken reflections of earth and sky which belong to the surface of life, while the deep, silent current underneath, which is bearing us to weal or woe, is unknown and unheeded by them.

It is not given to all of us to be deep or even clear thinkers, but we ought all to ask ourselves from time to time, in the most searching way, with prayers for guidance, What do I really in my heart of hearts believe, and why do I believe it? What is the bedrock on which my life is built? What parts of the Christian faith are alive for me? What are the beliefs which, if they were proved untrue, would leave a dreadful void in my mind? As we answer these questions, we will know what our religion is.

Unless our lives are the faithful expression of our convictions, and our convictions the rational justification of our lives, we are not in contact with reality at all, and we cannot know Him who said, 'I am the Truth.'

Christ the Revealer

John xiv. 9.—'Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?'

1. THERE are two tendencies in religious thought, either of which would succeed in driving a wedge of separation between Christ and God.

(1) The first is that tendency which would depreciate the part that Jesus has played in bringing us to what knowledge of God we possess to-day. It recognizes that Jesus had

an important work to do in the age in which He lived, and that He has to a large extent influenced the thought of the centuries since He came on earth, but to this view He seems incidental in human history, and that with Him, as with other men, if He had not done the work He did, it would still have been accomplished by someone else. The feeling at the back of the protest is that God is so great in power, and His ways of making Himself known so many and so varied, that it is narrowing Him to seem to place too much value upon any one of His revelations to men. If there had been no Jesus to teach us of the Father, there would have been some other to fulfil the same mission among his fellows.

So it does not seem to this school of thought to be of supreme moment that Jesus came; it values what He did, but above and beyond all that He gave to the world there is the infinite power and wisdom of God, which if one instrument fails can raise up others to do the same work. Now, however plausible that school of thought may be, it is none the less certain that it tends to diminish the sense of any direct message of God to the world in the coming of Christ. It suggests that Christ's voice was one among many possible voices, and even to suggest that is to rob us of the sense that God sent His Son into the world to save the world.

¶ A Brahman came to me confidentially one day and said, 'Your addresses have been very much enjoyed, but there is one thing I would suggest. If you will preach Christ as *a* way, all right, but say that there may be other ways as well. If you do this, India will be at your feet.' I replied: 'I am not looking for popularity, and it is not a question what I should say. It is a question of what are the facts. They have the final word.' I should be glad, more than glad, if I could say that there are others who are saving men, but I know of only One to whom I dare actually apply the term 'Saviour.' But I do dare apply it to Christ unreservedly and without qualification.[1]

(2) There is another tendency, however, in religious thought which produces the same result of making a separation between Christ and God. This is the tendency which dwells almost entirely upon the human aspects of the life and work of Jesus. It sees Him in relation to the life and needs of His own time, dwells on the truths He spoke and on the wonderful beauty of His life and work; it shows us the meaning of His Cross as the greatest act of heroism and self-sacrifice in human history, but it always stops short at the human aspect of what He did and what He was. That is the characteristic emphasis of modern Christianity.

For a long while Christ was worshipped as sitting at the right hand of God, the Saviour and the Judge of men, but those who worshipped Him had a very insufficient knowledge of His teaching, of His attitude to the problems of life and to the needs of men and women. So it was that Christianity drifted far out of touch with the spirit of Jesus Himself—it became hard and dogmatic. When the feeling of remoteness had gone so far that the hunger for a new religious reality began to be felt, men turned back from the Christ of the Church and the Creeds to the Christ of the Gospels—away from the conventional and the formal and the dogmatic, to the real figure, to know Him as He really lived among men. The glow of that new discovery has touched the hearts of men and women who under the older presentation of things would have remained cold.

Behold Him now where He comes,
  Not the Christ of our subtle creeds
But the Christ of our hearths and homes,
  Our hopes and prayers and needs;
The brother of want and blame,
  The lover of women and men,
With a love that puts to shame
  All passions of mortal ken.

This new discovery of Jesus struck the greatest blow at all kinds of ecclesiasticism with its narrowing and hardening influences. There has been, however, another effect of that new discovery. Men turned from a Christ to whom the Creeds paid Divine honours to the Christ who appears in the pages of the Gospels, but they tended to fasten on everything which spoke of Christ's humanity, and to ignore or set on one side the words which spoke of His divinity. No doubt men wanted to get a clear vision of the human Jesus, and in order to make the picture quite clear the other aspect of things was ruled out, in the exaggerated and one-sided way men have. But to go back to Jesus, and to get a clear picture of the human life, the teaching and the work, and to stop at

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road*, 64.

that point does not, and never can, give us a Christ who is the object of faith to-day. We can study the teaching and feel the inspiration of the example, but if we go no further than that we have got nothing to which faith can cling to now. The hands of faith cannot grope their way through the dividing centuries to touch the hem of His garment! In the merely human aspect of things Christ must always be the Christ of yesterday, never of to-day. The human interpretation drives the same wedge of separation between Christ and God.

¶ It is told of Thomas Carlyle that once, in Brittany, he was passing a wayside crucifix. He stood a little, gazing at the bent, thorn-crowned form. Then he said pityingly, 'Aye, poor fellow, your day's up now!' Not a figure like this, but a figure like Frederick was to dominate the modern world. Time passed, and the great sorrow of his life came upon him. His wife died. Someone read to him, an old man in the chill and shadow of the approaching night, the familiar words—'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.' Then Carlyle said, 'Aye, if you were God, you had a right to say that, but if you were only a man, what do you know more than the rest of us?'

2. Was He merely Teacher and Example or is He Revealer as well? We know what our own hearts wish to answer to that question, but we must not be led merely by what we wish and hope. Our hearts must be silent while we go back again and consult Him. If we do that, the result is very clear and certain. Not the slightest doubt attaches to it. We, too, can go back to the Jesus who lived on earth and who taught men, and if we do that we shall find with absolute clearness that He believed He was speaking in God's very name. He knew Himself to be One who spoke with an authority which was given to Him. If we do go back to Jesus we cannot make of Him merely One who taught the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and who went about among His fellows doing good. We find more than that. We find One who is conscious all the time that He was not as other men are, that He stands in a unique relationship to God. And in this text that certainty reaches its climax. When it was uttered Jesus and His disciples stood under the shadows of separation. Already the shadow of the Cross fell across their path. In that hour and mood there was no place for unrealities; everything which was said was said in grim earnest; Philip puts the searching, testing question that no doubt every one wanted to ask. All the words about what the Father had done and would do, of the Father's Will and the Father's House, were ringing in their ears, and must have sounded a little remote to them. It was Jesus they wanted; to know what He thought and what He would do, for the Father was distant and Jesus was near. And so Philip asks the obvious question—'Before you go show us the Father.' Then there comes the reply which is the greatest word, the most decisive thing ever spoken in this world, and it is spoken with the quietness of absolute assurance. 'Have I been such a long time with you, and yet have you not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.'

If we really face that word we shall confront the greatest issue of Christian faith. No man who is sane dare say, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,' unless there was in his mind a certainty surpassing all the certainties which are ours. It is by an infinite degree the greatest claim which any man has taken upon his lips. Behind all the witnesses of the Church and the doctrines of the Creeds, let us get to the real figure who started this strange movement in the world, but when we get there what we find is no merely human figure or brotherly voice, no equal spirit to greet ours, but One who, with all, and more than all, that the world knows of brotherhood and the spirit of comradeship, speaks with this mysterious mastery. That is the real Jesus, and He is just as real and natural when He speaks this word as when He takes the children in His arms or heals the sick at eventide.

We are convinced that Christ is the Revealer of God; that His way of forgiving is God's eternal way; that the love of Christ is the picture in time of how God always loves; that the value Christ placed on human life is God's estimate of its worth; and that the cost of love which Christ took upon Himself on the Cross is the symbol of the endless travail of God to win His children's hearts.

That is the faith which is both a challenge

and a rest, the answer of God to the needs of men, the gospel for every age and of all the ages. Each generation may look at it from its different standpoint, and interpret it in various ways, but that is a small matter. The essence of the faith, which remains the same, is that in looking into the face of Christ we are beholding the glory of God, and that the answer to the question, 'What is God like?' is, 'The heart of God is as the heart of Jesus.'

Our God is an eternal Christ;
Unchangeable, unchanged,
As Christ was then, so God is now.[1]

Greater Works than Christ's

John xiv. 12.—'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.'

1. The more we think about these words, the greater their significance appears. They are rich in suggestiveness; but they are very hard to understand. Did our Lord literally intend to predict that His followers in the centuries to come were actually going to do greater works than He, the Son of God, was then doing? We feel that the statement is one which no one but Christ would have ventured to make, one which men hardly venture to make now, in spite of the fact that they have His authority for it. We certainly have not reached the stage of feeling that we fully understand His meaning. Can we give any explanation of it at all? Can we suggest any way in which it has been, or is being, partially fulfilled?

It has been suggested that the prediction was fulfilled by the experiences which characterized the Apostolic age. But can we regard that as an adequate explanation? The Apostles themselves and some of the other disciples wrought, no doubt, many wonderful works. The primitive Church was filled with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit which resulted in strange manifestations, such as the gift of speaking with unknown tongues. The elders of the Church prayed over sick people, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord, and thus healed both bodily and spiritual infirmities. But can one say of any of these things that they were greater works than those which were done by Christ Himself?

[1] John Oxenham.

Again, it has been suggested that He may have been referring to the wider spiritual effects produced by the preaching of the gospel as time went on. Our Lord Himself had merely taught in Palestine: He had appealed, with but few exceptions, to Jews. The Apostles and their successors, on the other hand, were to preach to the Gentiles throughout the world. But does this extension of the area over which Christianity was preached really make the spiritual work done by the disciples greater than that done by the Master?

2. The reason which Christ Himself gives for these greater works is that He is about to leave His disciples—'because I go unto my Father.' He thus definitely connects His prediction with the increase of power from on high given at Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost these mighty works began. How long were they to continue? Was the promise given only to the Apostles and to the age in which they lived? Or was it to extend to later generations? Much turns on the question, how far our Lord's horizon extended as He looked forward. Was it bounded, as some think, by the fall of Jerusalem some forty years later, that is, before the Fourth Gospel was written? That seems improbable. Did Christ Himself suppose, as many of the early disciples undoubtedly supposed, that His Second Coming was not to be delayed very long? To that question we can at present give no final answer. Christ's apocalyptic teaching is hard to understand, and there are phrases which tell both ways. But it has been pointed out with great force that much of our Lord's policy during His ministry is difficult to comprehend except on the supposition that He was looking forward to a far-distant future. Consider, for instance, His seeming indifference about the number or the worldly position of His adherents. He discourages would-be followers: He withdraws Himself when His popularity is at its height: He refuses to work signs and wonders to order, as a means of convincing influential opponents. If we regard Him as aiming merely at immediate success, this conduct is inexplicable, but if He felt that He was starting a movement which was to go on working for countless ages, then we can understand why in His eyes the important thing was not the success of the moment, but the laying down of principles which should ensure permanence

and progress. A thousand years are with the Lord as one day. 'God is patient,' says St Augustine, 'because He is eternal.'

We cannot presume to determine with any exactness how far the limitations of our Lord's human nature interfered with the clearness of His insight into the future. The mystery of the Incarnation defies analysis. We only know that there were limitations. But we can at least claim for Him a power of anticipation such as all great leaders of thought have possessed. As we look back over the history of scientific progress, we see that the pioneers of any great advance in knowledge have always foreseen that greater works would be done in their department in the future than those which they themselves were doing. They could not, of course, foretell the exact direction from which the new advance was to come, or the precise shape which it would assume. But that it would come they had no doubt. They were sure of this because they foresaw that their successors would have greater advantages than they themselves had had. For at each step forward in any scientific subject the investigator is able to draw upon the accumulated stores of past observation and experience in that subject. He does not start afresh from the beginning: he starts where his predecessor left off. The result is that each generation in turn enters on an enlarged heritage of knowledge.

¶ Many modern folk have a quite unjustified sense of intellectual superiority over their ancestors because so many evils which our forebears took for granted we would not endure, and so many social improvements which seemed to them impossible we take for granted. But the difference between us and our ancestors does not lie primarily in individual increase of mental power on our part. There is no evidence that any man's intellect on earth to-day is equal to Aristotle's, nor do we know with any surety that the brain capacity of mankind as a whole is greater now than it was in the Ice Age. What has happened is mainly the slow accumulation of a social heritage. By long and patient processes of aspiring, thinking, trying, daring, and sacrificing, mankind has accumulated a cultural inheritance.[1]

3. Let us try to apply these thoughts to our Lord's promise that His disciples, if they believe in Him, shall do greater works than He did. Christianity, also, has its stores of accumulated experience. Ever since Christ came to men there has been a Power at work in the world which has been gradually, if slowly, building up and raising to higher levels the ideal of the Christian life. Our greatest saints now cannot be regarded as holier men or women than the saints of old, but they have before them greater possibilities as to the interpretation of the teaching of Jesus both on its intellectual and its practical side. Each successive generation of Christians, if we put aside periods of actual stagnation, has entered upon a new and wider inheritance of Christian civilization, the outcome of centuries of Christian nurture and Christian tradition. We know, of course, that there is an immense set-off which has to be placed against this upward movement of Christianity. We think of the ignorant masses whom Christ's message has failed to reach: we think of the indifference or contempt which it sometimes encounters in educated circles. The failures, the mistakes, the negligences of the Church, both now and in the past, are deplorable. Yet can we really doubt, not merely that the world is vastly the better and the richer for the standard that Christianity has set, but that the uplifting influence of that standard still continues? Those Christians nowadays whose hearts and lives have been really touched by the power of the Spirit of Christ, may be said in some respects to be doing greater works than have ever been done before in the history of the Church. Was there ever a time when greater, heartier, wider, better-organized efforts were being made to carry on two works which stand pre-eminent among those which our Master did on earth—the healing of men's bodies and the spiritual uplifting of their souls? And as the more enlightened treatment of disease and sin becomes further developed, we can hardly doubt that the works which men do in these two directions will become greater and greater. That is an encouraging thought, but it need give rise to no self-complacency. However great may be the works done by Christian men and women nowadays, they are only the result of past accumulations of Christian experience, the mere outcome of enlarged opportunity. The thought that the work is one thing while the man who does it is another, that the work may be greater while the man may be immeasurably less, does away with some of the difficulty

[1] H. E. Fosdick.

that we feel about our Lord's prediction. If conceivably men may some day do works greater from some points of view than He did, still His unique supremacy remains untouched.

4. Is there a danger at the present day of our putting too high a value on the work that is being done by those who believe in Christ? Some people think so. God alone knows the truth about this. God alone sees all the thought and study and investigation, all the love and sympathy and pity, all the patience and zeal and devotedness, which are being brought to bear on the terrible problems of our age. We may be sure, at any rate, that our Lord's promise about the greater works that should be done in the future has not yet received complete fulfilment. The promise only serves at present to suggest an ideal that is inconceivably distant. What possibilities may be in store for this and succeeding generations we know not, and conjecture is useless.

For the present let Christians be content to remind themselves that our Lord's promise in the text is made to those who believe in Him. Men will never do the works that He did—still less do greater works than He did—unless they keep in touch with Him, unless they regard Him as the source of all their power of doing good work. The Christian believes that at the back of all the progress made in medicine and surgery stands Christ, at the back of all faith-healing and treatment by suggestion stands Christ, at the back of all philanthropic work stands Christ. No Christian wishes to disparage non-Christian philanthropy. But if we once sever the intimate connection between the Spirit of Christ and human development, sooner or later the work is bound to suffer. We may talk of the blessings of civilization, of the gospel of material progress, of the value of non-religious ideals in the sphere of morals and politics. But none of these things will take the place of work done in the name of Christ and for Christ. They have not the secret of the power which Christ supplies to those who believe in Him. That power we can gain only in one way. It comes only from the simple, direct, close, personal following of Christ. If only each one of us will turn to Him and put ourselves in His charge, then who can foresee the added increase of beauty of character, of nobleness of conduct, and of control over material conditions that will come to us and our children as the generations pass on?

Prayer in Christ's Name

John xiv. 13.—'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do.'

1. We have been slow in learning the efficacy of prayer. But there is no limit placed to that power here, provided always the great condition laid down by Christ be realized. 'Whatsoever ye shall ask'—yes; but ye must ask, says Christ, 'in my name.' The phrase occurs frequently in these last discourses of our Lord, and it is full of significance. The 'name' is the person as revealed. In Hebrew usage the name of God is the revelation of God; and so the name of Christ means the revelation of God in Christ, and the use of the name, acceptance of, and allegiance to that revelation, or, in other words, a sincere and an effective discipleship. Belief in, fellowship with, love for, and service of Christ—that is discipleship; and prayer is only in His name as it is the expression and the exercise of the faith of a disciple.

¶ Sometimes men repeat words, and yet do not get what they ask. That is because they have not prayed in the spirit of Jesus, 'in His name.' The Sadhu uses a little story to illustrate the meaning of this. A wicked son presented to the governor of his land a petition in the name of his father who had served the governor with courage and honour; the son wanted employment. The governor, however, reminded him that his life was very different from his father's. 'Do not petition me in your father's name,' he said, 'but first go and act according to his example. Let his nobility be not only on your lips, but carried out in your daily life, and then your petition will be accepted.'[1]

(1) Prayer in Christ's name must be the approach and appeal of the earthly children to their heavenly Father; it must be in penitence and faith, humility and confidence, desire for God's blessing, but submission to His will. It must be childlike, but not childish; a self-committal, thankful and trustful, to the wisdom, power, and goodness of God.

(2) It must be in accord with the purpose of

[1] E. Sanders and E. Judah, *Sundar Singh*, 95.

God as revealed in Christ towards His children. That will is not their physical benefit, secular advantage, selfish gains or worldly goods, but their forgiveness, deliverance, blessedness, eternal life. As this is God's chief concern, it should also be His children's. What they should care so much for as to make it the burden of their prayers is their growth in the truth and grace of Christ; what they should seek first in prayer as well as in word and in deed is the Kingdom of God and His righteousness in their own growth towards perfection like the Father's.

(3) As the purpose of God in Christ is the universal good, prayer in the name of Christ can never be selfishly confined to individual interests, be they even moral and religious. The spread of the gospel throughout all the earth, the growth of the Kingdom of God in human society, the victory of truth, love, holiness over falsehood, hate, and sin, for these must the disciple pray, if he would pray in Christ's name, in accord with His revelation of God.

(4) The Christian does pray in the name of Christ for the relief of sorrow, deliverance from danger, help in need for himself and his dear ones. Is he mistaken in so doing? Does the use of the name of Christ exclude such petitions? Assuredly not, if these circumstances hinder our devotion and service, and if a change of them would free us for fuller and better work for God in the world. Assuredly not, also, if we offer our petitions in entire submissiveness to God's will, with a readiness to welcome even the continuance of these adverse conditions should the wisdom and goodness of God so appoint. Assuredly not, even if these two conditions are only imperfectly fulfilled, so long as it is in a humble and confident intimacy with God that we desire Him to know all our wants and wishes, to present ourselves unreservedly before Him even as we are.

If when I kneel to pray,
With eager lips I say,
'Lord, give me all the things that I desire,
Health, wealth, fame, friends, brave heart, religious fire,
The power to sway my fellow-men at will,
And strength for mighty works to banish ill,'
In such a prayer as this
The blessing I must miss.

But, if I lowly fall,
And thus in faith I call:—
'Through Christ, O Lord, I pray Thee give to me,
Not what I would, but what seems best to Thee,
Of life, of health, of service, and of strength,
Until to Thy full joy I come at length,'
My prayer shall then avail,
The blessing shall not fail.

2. When prayer is offered in His name, whatsoever is asked, Christ will do. If the condition is fulfilled the certainty of an answer is assured. It is worth noting that in this verse Jesus speaks of prayer as addressed to and as answered by Himself. In other passages He speaks of prayer as presented to and fulfilled by the Father. If prayer be addressed to Jesus, it must be addressed not to a human companion and helper, but to the Divine Saviour and Lord; and not to Him as taking the place of God the Father, but as the way to God the Father. It is only as we think of Him as in God and God in Him that there can be the certainty that our prayer to Him will be answered. We must think of Christ as God incarnate, as bringing to us in human form Divine reality; and thus the tenderness, sweetness, and gentleness which attract will assure us also of a love wise and strong as the eternal and perfect God. We must think of God as revealed in Christ, and then the majesty and exaltation of God will not overwhelm us, but God will stoop to our low estate in the self-emptying of His grace in Jesus Christ. Whether we address the Son or the Father in prayer may seem a matter of indifference; but it does make a difference in the quality of prayer if we think of Jesus apart from God, or of God apart from Jesus in our approach or our appeal.

Must the certainty of an answer to prayer to Christ depend on His word alone, or can we offer any reasons for it? The believer has in his own experience the witness that the word of Christ is true, and could rest on that alone, if needful, even if there were much in his life to challenge his trust. But this confidence may and should seek such confirmation as it can find.

(1) We know that Christ by His Spirit in us commands a direct and potent influence over our inner life in enlightening our minds, quickening our hearts, and renewing our wills. If we submit ourselves to His influence, He will fulfil

His purpose in us, and will satisfy our aspirations for the perfecting of the work of grace which He has begun in us, That Christ can bring about moral and spiritual changes in us, and that the prayer of faith is the occasion of His work of grace in us, is an assured fact of the Christian experience.

(2) We are constrained by our human love to pray for the moral and spiritual good of others; that Christ can influence them as He influences us we can assume. But must there not be a receptivity in them for His influence, such as we by our prayer offer when we pray for ourselves? If they are not praying for themselves, but are even, as we may know to our sorrow, defiant and disobedient, can our prayers take the place of theirs as the occasion of His work of grace in them? It is certain that God cannot exercise His omnipotence in making any man good against his own will, and our prayers cannot compel those for whom we pray to yield to God's Spirit. God's purpose may be hindered, thwarted, defeated by persistent sin and unbelief. Nevertheless our prayers for others are not in vain. If the loved one for whom we pray knows of our intercession, the constraint of our love will be upon him to soften the hardness of his heart. Even if he does not, our intercession is not valueless. For to judge from the practice of Christ in His healing ministry, human faith is a condition of release, as it were, of the Divine grace; and that faith may be exercised on behalf of others as well as ourselves.

¶ Such is the love of God towards us, such the dignity which He bestows upon us, to be co-operators with Himself, that man's fervent cry for others who never pray for themselves, inspired by Himself, upheld by His own grace of 'hope against hope,' obtains that last first grace which won the hitherto obdurate rebel to Himself. God's word guarantees this, when it bids us pray 'for all men,' because God 'will have all men to be saved.' God's word is justified in act by the known instances of those whose souls He has saved through prayers which He Himself inspired. Witness he, the great teacher of the Church till now, of whom, though unknown in the flesh and known only through the eminence of his rebellion, it was said: 'it is not possible that the son of those tears should perish'; who himself, when converted, owned himself to be the fruit of those nine years' unbroken, unfaltering prayers of his mother St Monica, who lived for his conversion and, when this object of her being was accomplished, yielded up her own soul to God.[1]

(3) When we pray for relief from suffering, deliverance from danger, or supply of our wants, can we be as confident that God will so direct the order of Nature as to meet our wishes? It is not unbelief to admit that here we cannot have the same confidence that our prayers will be answered *in the letter* as when we seek spiritual blessing; for, while we can be sure that God wills our salvation, we cannot be so sure that He wills our ease, comfort, pleasure, health. It may be His purpose to make us, even as the Author of our salvation, perfect through sufferings. But our prayers will be answered in the way Paul's was, by the assurance of the sufficiency of Christ's grace to enable us to endure. While in all our prayers for earthly goods we must cheerfully accept this limitation of our desires by God's will for us, we should ignore Jesus' teaching if we abandoned the belief in an individual providence of God exercised in and through the universal order of Nature. We do not destroy the order of our bodies by the voluntary control we wield over their activities; and so God, of whose wisdom the laws of Nature are the expression, and of whose power the forces of Nature are the exercise, is according to these laws and through these forces making us individually the objects of His care and bounty. Our prayers may be the occasion of His doing for us, and bestowing on us, what should otherwise be withheld, because He recognizes and respects our freedom, and freely responds to our free approach in prayer.

The Trinity

John xiv. 16.—'I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.'

To the average Christian the Trinity seems a subject which belongs to the purely speculative side of theology and remote from the actual living of the good life. But is it all mere abstract speculation remote from actuality? Has the Christian Church through the centuries been jealously maintaining and guarding a doctrine remote from the practicalities of life and

[1] E. B. Pusey, *Occasional Sermons*, 298.

religion? This is far from the truth, for, on reflection, we see that there is nothing so immediate and practical as what a man is thinking about God, and nothing of more importance, except perhaps what God is thinking about him. The doctrine of the Trinity is the Christian attempt to express the idea of God so as to do justice to what Christians believe about God on the strength of a profound religious and Christian experience. There is no pretence of finding out the Almighty to perfection in it, and a reverent agnosticism will always be part of the Christian position and mind. But man must think out as best he can what he does believe about God, and the doctrine of the Trinity is what emerged as Christian minds set about this process so inevitable for rational creatures.

1. *The doctrine of the Trinity has its origin in certain indisputable facts and experiences.*—The first Christians did not formulate the doctrine of the Trinity in a cool speculative way. The idea of it, and the statement of it did not begin in speculations and discussions. It began in the fellowship meetings of plain Christian people, and in their prayers and testimony. It came out of their attempt to put into words an experience. They believed in God before they heard of Jesus. They believed in one Infinite Eternal God, Transcendent Spirit, Invisible, inhabiting Eternity, and of His nature they held the two massive truths which are the gift to religion of the Hebrew people, that God is One and that God is Holy. When they came to know Jesus He mightily reinforced that old and basal belief. But now some new facts about God came within their range of experience. They came to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. As they reflected upon Him—His doings, gestures, the life He lived, the death He died—and as they received assurance that He had conquered death, they felt that all this had brought them something new about God. These men felt what all who come into close contact with Jesus Christ feel. They felt that the closer they came to Him the nearer they knew themselves to be to God. They felt they were in contact with God when in the company of Jesus, and as they let their deepest souls respond to Him they began to detect that there is something in God which labours to redeem mankind, and comes up close to us in our sin and need, and identifies itself with us. That is something different from the Holy Transcendent Mysterious God of whom they were and remained so sure. They said, 'Here in the wonderful life lived among us, and in this so strange death on the Cross, is a redeeming activity of God, an outgoing of the One and Holy God to mankind.' They said, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.'

There was a third and further experience for them. Jesus had taught them of the presence of God in all things like a living Breath, and from what they felt in their souls of the Divine impulse when Jesus had risen from the dead they learned that God, One and Holy, is more than a transcendent God, more too than Holy Father, more than redeeming Saviour. He is also with and in all individual souls, a pervasive Spirit, wooing, comforting, warning, leading, teaching, and helping always.

There was a curious identity between these three that the thought of the One was ever bringing to their remembrance the Others, whilst all the time the sense of communion with Absolute Ultimate Deity grew deeper. The first disciples were content to register the facts, they formulated no doctrine, they sought only to launch into other lives their own wonderful experience. But the mind of the new Church was essentially active, as the regenerated mind always is, and the need for a theology arose inevitably as the challenge of pagan philosophy asserted itself. The faith had to be, as it will always have to be, intellectually reasoned and presented. The result, after much development of the Church's thought, was the Athanasian Creed.

2. *The Classic Statement.*—There are at least two things in this Creed that are of great importance.

(1) The emphasis is not only upon the Triune nature of God, but upon His Unity. Athanasius took the greatest possible care to assert the latter. Over and over again in the Creed we have such statements as the following: 'And yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal.' 'So are we forbidden to say there be three Gods or three Lords.' 'In the oneness of the Creator there is a trinity, a threeness not of separate individuals, but of manifestations of the same Reality.'

(2) It speaks of three Persons, and it is the term 'Person' which has been and is the cause of difficulty and perplexity. It is little wonder that it should be so. The early Christians wanted to say that there were three distinguishable elements in God. What could they call these three elements, aspects, activities or however else we may conceive them? Our trouble with the word is that by 'persons' we mean exclusive individuals, which is precisely what we do not believe about God. Whatever is meant by persons in the Godhead they are inclusive; an indwelling of each in the others. Language serves us an ill trick here, and refuses the help we need in a right word. If we say 'persons,' we suggest, against our meaning, separate individuals; if we say 'ways' or 'activities' or 'consciousness,' we lose the qualities of personality, which we feel most rightly must belong to the Unity we are thinking of.

A simple illustration from Nature may prove an analogy to this. In the lowest scale of being there is only one kind of life and one form of manifestation. As you travel upwards life grows more complex. To the animal life is added the life of instinct and the life of affection, and when you pass out of the brute stage into the human you have, blended with physical life, an intellectual life, and a moral and spiritual life: mysterious powers of will, conscience, memory, and yet behind all these various manifestations there is the unity we call personality. Reflecting then upon the mystery of our own nature we may, as with humility and reverence we think of the Eternal Being, expect that the nature of God, infinitely beyond all limited natures, will be complex, with a unity nothing can destroy, yet with distinctions which forbid the reduction of Deity to simplicity.

It is one of the laws of being that, in proportion as one rises from lower to higher life, whilst the unity becomes greater, it is always the union of an increased variety in its parts. That Christian theology is on the track of a great truth here, is supported by the fact that both ancient and modern philosophies have been deeply conscious of the need for some such view of ultimate reality as this. There is a difficulty in thought that drives philosophy towards the trinitarian view. This difficulty was plain to Plato and to Aristotle. The latter, for example, in his teaching that 'philosophical contemplation' is the highest occupation, and therefore the most appropriate activity of God, is forced to ask, 'What does God contemplate?' Aristotle is obliged to answer: 'He contemplates Himself,' and there he stopped. But, as Dr Illingworth has so ably pointed out in his *Doctrine of the Trinity*, to stop at this point has most mischievous consequences. For example, it leaves no room for the moral nature of God. Aristotle denied moral attributes to God, with the result that God for Aristotle remains coldly aloof from real life—a mere abstraction barely conceivable. But to part company with the moral character of God is to render human morality void of a foundation. All man's goodness is grounded in the conviction that goodness *is* fundamental reality—an attribute of God. But it is of the essence of moral character that it is *social*. Virtue cannot exist and thrive only in our relation to oneself; there must be at least one other for virtue to really 'come alive.' Consider any great moral attribute such as Love, Justice, Humility. Any one of these things demands at least a minimum of society. If we are to think of God, then, as moral and personal, we must acknowledge the value of the Christian revelation that there is a plurality as well as a unity in the Divine Being. Thus we have arrived already at one great practical value of this doctrine. It safeguards the moral character of Godhead.

¶ 'As to the Trinity,' wrote Kingsley to Maurice, 'I do understand you. You first taught me that the doctrine was a live thing, and not a mere formula to be swallowed by the undigesting reason, and from that time I have learnt from you that a Father meant a real Father, a Son a real Son, a Holy Spirit a real Spirit who was good and holy. I have been able to draw all sorts of practical lessons from it in the pulpit and ground all my morality upon it.'

3. *Practical Value.*—The doctrine of the Trinity perfects our practical apprehension of the power of God in our own life. We all need to discover God in these three ways. We know Him as the Transcendent, Awful, Final Reality of things. The Absolute casts His Shadow over every form of relative being. Yet such a knowledge of God is not human enough for our salvation. We need to see God

as so practically sympathetic with our condition and our need that He descends to a real share in experience of our solid and sordid earth, following us with His love through tragedy, the companion for love's sake of all our human life that He may redeem and save us, not arbitrarily, but by the winning of our hearts! And even then, the salvation of a sinful humanity is not achieved. Our hearts must yield *to the mighty impulse to respond*—to breathe back to Him in ever-increasing love and devotion His Spirit until we know God *by possessing Him*, by in-breathing and out-breathing Him.

¶ Martensen says, 'Christian worship calls men away from the altars of Polytheism, and elevates their souls to the one God, but it does so in a threefold direction; for we know by faith that eternal life streams down to us out of three personal fountains of love; from God the Father who created us; from God the Son who has redeemed us; from God the Holy Ghost who sanctifies us and makes us children of God. In the Trinity alone we possess the whole of Love.'

¶ Here is how the poet puts it:

Dost thou pray
For what thou hast? This very day
The Holy Three have crossed thy way.

Did not the gifts of sun and air
To good and ill alike declare
The all-compassionate Father's care?

In the white soul that stooped to raise
The lost one from her evil ways,
Thou saw'st the Christ, whom angels praise!

A bodiless Divinity,
The still small Voice that spake to thee
Was the Holy Spirit's mystery!

. . . . .

Revealed in love and sacrifice,
The Holiest passed before thine eyes,
One and the same, in threefold guise.

. . . . .

I shut my grave Aquinas fast;
The monkish gloss of ages past,
The schoolman's creed aside I cast.

And my heart answered, 'Lord, I see
How Three are One, and One is Three;
Thy riddle hath been read to me!' [1]

[1] Whittier.

The Promise of the Comforter

John xiv. 16, 17.—'And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth.'

At the announcement made to them by their Master that He was going away the world seemed to become a blank for the disciples. All the sunshine of life seemed to suffer immediate and total eclipse. For in a sense they had nothing in the world but Jesus. For Him they had sacrificed fathers and mothers and home and friends and business, and every earthly prospect. In response to His call they had embarked upon a new life. It was not an easy life; it was a hard life, a toilsome life, a sacrificial life. Already they had been called upon to suffer trial and persecution for His Name's sake. But with Jesus at their side they had never faltered. With His presence to cheer and strengthen them, they had bravely held on their way. But now He was going! The whole edifice of their life seemed to fall crashing in ruin about their ears. And then to these panic-stricken disciples Jesus explains what His departure means. He had been as God to them. In Him God had touched the very springs of their life and entered into their souls. But His going did not mean that God would forsake them. If He went, they would not be left desolate; God would send them another Advocate, another Helper, who would be to them all and more than Jesus Himself had been; who would bring them just the same sense of God's nearness and presence; who would inspire and help them just as effectively as Jesus Himself had done. This other Comforter, this other Advocate, was the Spirit; and He was to abide with them for ever. That is the promise—the Spirit is to take Christ's place. Jesus was Emmanuel, God with them; the Spirit was to be the abiding God *within* them.

¶ The word translated 'Comforter,' which occurs so often in this discourse of our Lord, is found nowhere else in the New Testament except in the First Epistle of St John, where it is rendered 'Advocate'; 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.' And this, without doubt, is a more faithful rendering of the word which Christ used than the more familiar 'Comforter.' An advocate is one who is called to our side to be our friend and helper, more especially to plead our cause in a court of justice; and this also is

the meaning of the word 'Paraclete.' Perhaps, however, the word 'Comforter' may be retained without loss, if only we remember to give it its full and original meaning. To 'comfort' is not primarily and originally to console, but to strengthen, to fortify; and the 'Comforter' whom Christ promised to His disciples was not only one who should soothe them in their sorrows, but should stand by them in all their conflicts, their unfailing friend and helper.

1. *The Holy Spirit and the World.*—Each Whit-Sunday we celebrate the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit upon the first disciples; that great event was, in a very special sense, a 'coming' of the Spirit. He came then with a fullness and power the world had never witnessed before; but let us not make the mistake of thinking that it was on that day of Pentecost the Spirit came upon men for the first time. We find the Spirit in the Old Testament. It is quite true that the writers of the Old Testament conceived of the Spirit rather as a Power than a Person; still, the Spirit is there. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, to fit him for the task of delivering Israel; the Spirit of the Lord came upon David, to equip him for the responsibility of kingship; and above everything else the Spirit of the Lord came upon this man and that and they prophesied; as Peter puts it in his Epistle: 'they spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost.' And we may go further still and say that no land and no people have been outside the sphere of the Spirit's operations. We think of men like Gautama in India, Confucius in China, and Socrates and Plato in Greece. They were, as Dean Farrar calls them, 'seekers after God,' and when we read their writings, with their dazzling visions of truth, with their lofty ethics, we have no difficulty in saying that the Spirit of God was at work in the minds and hearts of these men, and that they too spoke from God, moved by the Holy Ghost. 'There is the light which lighteth every man coming into the world,' says John, and the Holy Spirit is that light. In all the ethical ideals and moral strivings of man, we see the working of the Spirit of God. In every generous impulse, in every holy emotion, in every lofty aspiration, we see evidences of the Spirit's presence and operation.

2. *The Holy Spirit and the Church.*—When we come to consider the work of the Spirit so far as the Church, the community of Christian people, is concerned, we find stress laid upon two things.

(1) The Holy Spirit is *the Spirit of Truth*, the source of Christian enlightenment. The disciples had been in the fellowship of Christ for about two years. They had come to Him steeped to the very lips in Jewish materialism and prejudice. For two years they had been in Christ's school; but they were painfully slow scholars. With a kind of fatal perversity they misunderstood and misinterpreted their Master. Think of their quarrels as to who should be greatest; their intolerance; their dream of material empire. And now it had come to the last night. In less than twenty-four hours Jesus was to be taken from them! Will any one pretend that just at this stage the disciples had really entered into sympathy with the mind of Christ? Will any one assert that just at this point they were masters of Christian truth? The disciples themselves were conscious of their lack; they knew they needed teaching still. And that is the office which Jesus promises the Spirit shall perform for them. He is the Spirit of Truth; He is to lead them into all the Truth; He is to bring to remembrance the things which Christ had told them.

It is not all truth, but all the truth of Christ, with which the Spirit deals—the truth concerning Himself, and the truth which He taught. Nor is it a new revelation which the Spirit gives, but rather a more perfect understanding of that which has been already given in Christ. Here, then, is the test by which to try all that claims the authority of spiritual truth. Does it 'glorify' Christ? Does it lead us into a fuller knowledge of Him 'in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden'?

'Whosoever goeth onward,' says St John, in a remarkable passage, for which English readers are indebted to the Revised Version, 'and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God.' In other words, no true progress is possible except as we abide in Christ. If He be ignored and left behind, though we still keep the name and boast ourselves 'progressives,' we have lost the reality. On the other hand, every new discovery, every movement in the life of men, every intellectual and spiritual awakening which serves to make manifest the glory of Christ as Creator, or Revealer, or Redeemer, is a fresh fulfilment of His promise concerning the guiding Spirit of truth.

We have moved far in nineteen centuries. Old forms of belief have perished. The changes, while they have been in process, have often caused anxiety and pain to godly people. But look back over the course of the centuries. Is it not true that we have a better understanding of God than the Church ever possessed before? Does not the new sense of obligation to the world, as represented in the foreign missionary enterprise, mean that we have entered more fully into the mind of Christ? Does not the new sense of social obligation, the new feeling of brotherhood, mean that we understand a little better the mind of Jesus who came not to be ministered unto but to minister? And does not our new name for God, 'Father,' represent a growing understanding of the mind of Christ? We think of all these things, and we know the Holy Ghost has been working through the ages for the enlightenment of His people.

¶ A Spirit does actually exist which teaches men, in an instinctive and marvellous way, whatever lovely arts and noble deeds are possible to them. Without it you can do no good thing. To the grief of it you do many bad ones. In the possession of it is your peace and your power.[1]

(2) The Holy Spirit is *the Spirit of Power.* 'Behold,' said the ascending Christ, 'I send forth the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city until ye be clothed with power from on high.' This was the promise, 'Ye shall receive power,' and this, in brief, the story of its fulfilment, 'With great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.' Let any one read the early chapters of St Luke's narrative; let him mark the utter disparity between the 'acts' and the 'apostles'—between the things done and the men by whom they were done—and then let him ask if there is any explanation which does really bridge the gulf short of this, that behind Peter and John and the rest there stood Another, speaking through their lips, working through their hands, Himself the real Doer in all those wondrous 'acts'? 'Why,' asked Peter, when the multitude were filled with wonder and amazement at the healing of the lame man, 'Why fasten ye your eyes on us as though by our own power or godliness we had made him to walk?' Work that is really of God can never be accounted for in that fashion. There is always a something in the effects which cannot be traced back to a human cause.

¶ When D. L. Moody was holding in Birmingham one of those remarkable series of meetings which so deeply stirred our country in the early 'seventies, Dr Dale, who followed the work with the keenest sympathy, and yet not without a feeling akin to stupefaction at the amazing results which it produced, once told Moody that the work was most plainly of God, for he could see no real relation between him and what he had done.[1]

Faith in the Holy Ghost is a great faith. All history proclaims it a reasonable faith; all history asserts the presence and working of the Spirit of God amongst men. And yet, to believe in the Spirit in the only real and effective way, we must know the power of the Spirit in our own life. The man who has been quickened, cleansed, empowered in his own soul—that is the man who believes in the Holy Ghost. And such an experience may be ours, if only we open our hearts to His coming. Life and cleansing and power are in His gift. He will lift us into new and joyous levels of existence. A perpetual joy will be in our souls.

Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire;
Thou the Anointing Spirit art,
Who dost Thy sevenfold gifts impart.
Thy blessèd unction from above
Is comfort, life, and fire of love:
Enable with perpetual light
The dulness of our blinded sight;
Anoint and cheer our soilèd face
With the abundance of Thy grace;
Keep far our foes; give peace at home;
Where Thou art Guide no ill can come;
Teach us to know the Father, Son,
And Thee of Both, to be but One:
That, through the ages all along,
This may be our endless song,
'Praise to Thy eternal merit,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!'[2]

[1] Ruskin.

[1] G. Jackson, *The Teaching of Jesus*, 76.
[2] J. Cosin.

Judas' Question

John xiv. 22.—'Judas (not Iscariot) saith unto him, Lord what is come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?' (R.V.).

We have said all that we know about Judas when we have said that he was one of our Lord's Apostles, and that he was the son or the brother of James. There is little reason to doubt that he is the same as 'Lebbæus, whose surname was Thaddæus.' We may therefore say of him that he was a man who was known by three names, and that two of them were probably added as terms of endearment in his childhood, or as descriptive terms to mark his special characteristics in manhood. Judas stands out as a man of one question, not very important in itself, but which evoked a great word from Jesus of the greatest value to all.

1. 'Lord, what hath come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?' Judas' difficulty, of course, is not that his Master should manifest Himself to the Apostles, but that He should refuse to manifest His glory and power to the world. Why this refusal? Judas apparently thought that something had interfered with what seemed to be Christ's natural and obvious policy, to reveal Himself as the Messiah. The Messiah, all Jews believed, was to make a public appearance. What, then, had come to pass that Jesus would not manifest Himself unto the world? Something must have happened, Judas thinks, to limit the sphere of His manifestation. How could Jesus win the world, if He made no appeal to the world? That was Judas' difficulty, and it was one with which our Lord had been confronted more than once in the course of His ministry. His followers must often have wondered why He observed so much secrecy. Why did He command those whom He healed to tell no man? How could He expect people to believe in Him if He went away and hid Himself? 'Master,' said the Pharisees, 'we would see a sign from thee': but He refused to give the sign. 'If thou doest these things,' said His brethren, 'manifest thyself to the world': but again He refused. There was something in all this, we must admit, which was not quite easy for His disciples to understand.

The difficulty which Judas felt is felt by many people at the present day. Many of those who may be called half-believers in Christianity feel it strongly. Why does not Christ, they ask, reveal Himself unmistakably to every one? Why does not the New Testament supply the whole world with absolutely incontestable evidence of the Godhead of Jesus Christ? This generation, like many generations that have gone before it, seeketh after a sign. It asks for a demonstration of the truth of Christianity, as though religion were the same thing as a proposition of Euclid. That is not the spirit which Christ requires in those to whom He is willing to reveal Himself.

What do we mean when we talk of proving or demonstrating the truth of Christianity? We must not, of course, depreciate the value of Christian evidences. If we are to believe in Christianity, it must be on evidence of some kind. Christ Himself never disparaged the value of evidence. He frequently appealed to the evidence of His words and works. He upbraided the cities where most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not. He said of the Jews who rejected Him: 'If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin.' It is the rejection of the evidence contained in His teaching which our Lord is here condemning. The evidence on which Christianity rests is to some extent the same in kind as that on which all history rests. It must be apprehended by reason and tested by reason. So far, then, Christ and Christianity may be said to be manifesting themselves to the world. The evidence is before mankind, and it rests with men to accept it or reject it. But the evidence from Christ's life and teaching cannot be put on the same level as a purely intellectual demonstration. Something more than reasoning is required to appreciate it rightly, something more than scholarship or linguistic and archæological knowledge, something more than the trained faculty of historical research. These things have their value; they are of very great value for the rational justification of our belief, but they are not everything. In a matter of such profound moral and spiritual importance as the question of the reality of a Divine revelation, moral and spiritual considerations must necessarily come in. Our faith must always rest upon a much wider foundation of feeling and experience than we can set forth in logical reasoning.

2. We can now approach our Lord's answer to Judas' question, and see why it is that He manifests Himself to His followers, and why He does not manifest Himself to the world. Christ lays down certain conditions of His revelation of Himself to the human soul. There must be a moral and spiritual as well as a purely intellectual appreciation. Man's power of receiving a Divine revelation depends upon his willingness to obey the Divine Will. That is a truth on which our Lord emphatically insists. 'If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.' And this willingness to do the Divine Will is represented by Christ as resting ultimately on the personal love of Himself. 'If a man love me, he will keep my word.' Personal love and willing obedience, depth of feeling and rightness of will, are indispensable conditions before a man can accept, or even fully realize, Christ's revelation of Himself. That is why Christ does not—why He cannot—manifest Himself to the world. For the world of which He is thinking is the world which lives in opposition to God's Will. Christ cannot reveal Himself to the heart that hates, or to the will that deliberately refuses to obey. If we continually disregard God's claim upon our lives, if we make no effort to get into touch with God, if we feel no sorrow for sin, if the love of Christ wakes no echo in our hearts, how can we receive Christ's revelation of Himself, how can the appeal of Christianity have any real meaning for us?

In a famous discussion on Truth, Robert Louis Stevenson quotes Thoreau as saying, 'It takes two to speak the truth, one to speak and another to hear.' And so it was with Jesus Christ, even in His manifestation of God to men. 'He came to his own, and his own received him not.' They saw His face, but they had no power of perceiving His spirit. 'Light has come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.' The Light of the world was actually present in the mind and heart of Jesus Christ, and *yet* men walked in darkness. Why? Let Paul answer: 'But and if our gospel is veiled it is veiled in them that are perishing: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ should not dawn upon them.' And yet he says God shined in their believing hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The revelation is no revelation to the man who lacks perception.

¶ Robert Browning walks along the street of an Italian town and picks up a little book.

Do you see this square old yellow Book, I toss
I' the air, and catch again, and twirl about
By the crumpled vellum covers,—pure crude fact
. . . . . .
Examine it yourselves! I found this book,
Gave a *lira* for it, eightpence English.

It is merely the story of a somewhat gross criminal case. No one else saw anything in it, but the great poet saw 'The Ring and the Book,' and was able to teach his age many things concerning God and man.

3. 'If a man love me he will keep my word.' That is the test which Christ adopts. Do we love Him? Are we trying to keep His word? If we love, we shall try to obey; if we try to obey, He will manifest Himself to us, and we shall be able to recognize and accept His revelation of Himself. That recognition and acceptance may not perhaps come at once. To some seekers after God they never perhaps wholly come in this present life. We see, for instance, in Clough's poetry what difficulties his self-questioning intellect encountered in its quest after God, how little help his simple, beautiful, earnest life gave him towards realizing the presence in his heart of a Divine Personality.

> Do only Thou in that dim shrine,
> Known or unknown, remain divine.
> . . . . . .
> Be Thou but there—in soul and heart
> I will not ask to feel Thou art.

There were moments, indeed, when the stress and strain of Clough's spiritual unrest enabled him to reach something more definite. Here, for instance, the thought of God seems to have a more sustaining influence:—

O only Source of all our light and life,
  Whom as our truth, our strength, we see and feel,
But whom the hours of mortal moral strife
  Alone aright reveal.

Place side by side with this the words in which Christ answers Judas' question: 'If a man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.' Do we not feel that the Christian who, after much inward conflict has reached the full realization of the gracious promise, has reason to thank God for His unspeakable gift?

Our Lord's Legacy

John xiv. 27.—'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.'

What the world cannot give, the worldly cannot take. Even Christ can only give His gifts to His own. The world pays the world's work with the world's wages; Christ pays His own servants in a different coinage.

1. Our Lord tells us that He has a peace of His own to give, and that He gives it not as the world giveth. He does not say whether the world also has a peace of its own to give, or not; He only says that His way of giving it is not like the way in which the world gives whatever it has to give. In point of fact, if by peace is meant inward satisfaction, freedom from any sense of inward disharmony and disappointment, the world very seldom gives peace to its devoted servants. No doubt there have been some successful men, not spiritually-minded, who have been able to look back with satisfaction upon their careers. But those men have not been typical worldlings. They have loved their work for its own sake, which is more than half-way to loving it for Christ's sake. We are right to love our work, and be keenly interested in it. People who run away from life, who shrink from dipping their feet in the flowing river of time, are condemning the Creator for making the world and sending them into it. There is a work in the world which we were meant to do, and which will remain undone if we shirk it. This work must be done heartily and eagerly, as unto the Lord, even though it is apparently concerned only with perishable things. Perishable things for the sake of the imperishable, and imperishable things for their own sake—that is the rule for an immortal spirit sent by God into a world of change and chance. The honourable man who lives wholly wrapt up in his work misses a great deal, and we cannot envy him; but this is not true worldliness. The typical worldling does not love his work; he only loves what he can get by it. In his mind all people and things fall into two classes—instruments and obstacles. He only notices what helps or baffles him. This is the genuine worldling; it is not often that he attains peace. The 'hidden man of the heart,' who has been silenced, imprisoned, starved all his life, stands up at last and protests that the big fortune, or the big reputation, is of no use to him. He has other wants, which have been ruthlessly disregarded. This man is not at peace, and never will be till he is in his grave.

But what does our Lord mean when He says, 'Not as the world giveth, give I unto you'? What is the difference in method between His way of giving and the world's? The world says: 'If you want to win my prizes you must claim them and take them. You must know exactly what you want to get, and keep your mind steadily fixed on that goal, and that only. You must allow nothing to divert your attention, and must never forget that you have one end in life and only one.' There are some people who really serve the prince of this world in this whole-hearted manner.

But Christ does not say to us, 'Claim My gift of peace and take it.' He does not say to us, 'You are sent into the world to win peace for yourselves; win it at all costs.' He does not bid us forget everything else, and be ready to surrender everything else, in order to be at peace with ourselves. No, the peace of Christ is the free gift of Christ. It is given, not as the world giveth, which gives nothing for nothing; it is given as God giveth, who gives all for love. This means that peace is not to be the object directly aimed at. If we aim at it we shall not hit it. To grasp at peace for its own sake would be selfishness, and the peace of Christ is the negation of selfishness. The basis of Christian peace is single-hearted, joyous, and intelligent trust in God's goodness, and acceptance of His will. It is a very active and strenuous peace—a very warlike peace, we might almost say. If peace were merely negative freedom from toil and distraction, it might be directly aimed at. But against this sort of peace Carlyle cries out, 'Peace! a brutal lethargy is peaceable!' The noisome grave is peaceable! We hope for a living peace, not a dead one. Religion was not

intended to be a narcotic. If there is a peace of God for us it must be a peace which will not drug our soul or side-track us from the main road of the struggling world.

Not peace that grows by Lethe, scentless flower,
There in white languors to decline and cease;
But peace whose names are also rapture, power,
Clear sight and love; for these are parts of peace.

It is that kind of honourable peace which Christ offers us. '*My* peace,' He said. Think for a moment of the circumstances in which the offer was made. He was at the very storm-centre of a world seething with hatred and unrest. Black tempests were gathering around Him. He was facing the ordeal of His Cross. And yet it was out of that very maelstrom which was sucking Him down to death that He spoke of His peace.

¶ The story is told that once a patron sent for two artists and invited each of them to set out on canvas his idea of peace. One of them painted a moorland scene, quiet, lonely, with no living thing in sight, and in the centre a lake, still, unruffled, desolate. That is the peace of stagnation and of death. The other chose a roaring tumbling waterfall. Across the face of it was a spray of mountain ash, and on the spray a robin, singing quietly. That was much nearer to the peace of Christ.[1]

2. What then is Christ's peace? True peace is the harmony between our nature and our environment. Unrest comes from a clash between a man's nature and the world in which he lives. But here is the point. Our true environment is spiritual. If there is conflict in our souls, it is because we have chosen to live in a narrow world in which there is no room for our souls to find freedom. When we are in accord with God, we find peace. How can a man be at peace whose being is out of tune with the nature of things, whose will is at cross purposes with God? As well expect health in a body where all the physical laws are broken. Our lives need to be linked on to God. We are born to take our part in a movement which is far larger than ourselves. While our lives are moving in the orbit of selfishness there is sure to be confusion. There was no shadow between Christ and God. There was perfect understanding between Him and His Father, and where there are no shadows between a man and God, no earthly troubles can break this deep and final peace of the spirit; and out of that peace comes power to meet whatever life may bring.

How did this harmony with God show itself? One way was in a Divine valuation of life, which puts things in their true perspective. That valuation set Christ beyond the reach of many of the things which trouble us. Loss of property, for instance, did not trouble Him, or the fear of it, for He set no store by money for its own sake. The scorn of men or the withdrawal of their esteem did not trouble Him, for He set no value on the smile of popular favour. It is a wrong valuation of the good of life, which creates much of our unrest and lays us open to the torment of fear. The world will only be put right by men who value principles above possessions, who are detached enough from the treasures of earth to be undeterred from righteousness by the pistol-point of life's ills. The man who has accepted Christ's values is free. There are troubles he discounts at the very start. He has not staked his life on possessions, or position, or popularity, or any of these shifting foundations. He has sunk the base of his life down to the solid rock. He wants what Christ wants, and sees that that is best. What care we give ourselves by pinning our life's success to the little things instead of the big things, to the accidents instead of the essentials! It is the eternal values which make life great and fill it with joy and satisfaction.

¶ Dr Chalmers, the great Scottish divine, made a speech to the Assembly of the Church of Scotland about ministerial training in which he gave the story of his own changed mind. He had been a distinguished student of mathematics in his day; but that was poor preparation for a preacher of the gospel. 'Strangely blinded was I,' he said. 'What is the object of mathematical science? Magnitude and the proportion of magnitude. But, then, sir, I had forgotten two magnitudes, the littleness of time and the greatness of eternity.'

Another way in which Christ's peace showed itself was in His relation to men, a relation which sprang from His oneness with God. Much of our dispeace comes from a wrong attitude to others. The dark heart of the world's

[1] A. A. David, *Our Father*, 94.

unrest to-day is full of such things as hatred, suspicion, jealousy, spite, contempt of man for man. There is no peace in any heart till it is emptied of these or lifted above their reach. It is not a pleasant thing to be hated, but the dispeace comes when that hatred is allowed to stir the dust of our own passion. We lose our peace —not when others hate us, if there is no lurking suspicion that it has been deserved, but when we hate others. To hate or suspect or despise another spoils our own spirit, and it opens the door to a perfect storm of unrest. That was, in part, what Christ meant when He spoke of loving our enemies. He knew that there is nothing so fatal to peace as the spirit of hatred and revenge. Taunts and criticism drew from Him nothing but compassion. The worse people were, the more they were in need of God. The more they hated the more they were in need of love and guiding. Part of the secret of peace is this loving attitude towards others, 'Fret not thyself about evil-doers'—do not let the wrongs of others overthrow the balance of your own soul. All the big souls have had this love, this forbearing outlook on others, and it has kept them strong amid a thousand peering littlenesses.

¶ When Lincoln was elected President again after the Civil War he put behind him all the heart-breaking things that he had suffered. His peace was unbroken as he felt his position was the right one. 'With malice toward none,' he said, 'with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds'—including, of course, those of their enemies—'to care for the widow and the orphan, to do all that may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace for ourselves and all mankind.'

3. Peace comes from surrender and response to the love of God in all its challenge and all its security. And the love of God is a challenging thing. We have made too much of religion as a safety device for the soul, too much of it as a quiet haven of rest into which we retire and find peace. 'My peace,' said Christ, 'I give to you.' What lives the disciples led after that gift!

This peace calls us to battle. There is no peace we can accept for ourselves so long as the world is full of the sin and suffering which makes the lives of others unhealthy and unholy. There is no rest from mortal fight for any of us so long as our hearts are tainted with selfishness and pride. For the man who loves with the love of Jesus, and who enters into an alliance with Him, there is no languorous ease, no sheltered garden where he can slink out of the dust and heat.

But it means moving out, too, in response to the assurance of God's love. In giving us peace Christ gives us Himself. So He will never see us beaten. We shall be equal to every situation into which love may bring us. There is no dilemma into which faith carries us but there will be a way out. There is no trouble which meets us, if we have committed our lives to His love, which shall not turn to our advantage as His children. Is there any calm like the calm of resting in this almighty love? It is the peace of the full river, glorious, unresting yet unhurried. It is the deep assurance that love will conquer in the end, and already, through the victory of Christ, the situation is in the control of those piercèd hands.

¶ Stevenson's grandfather tells of an incident when the Bell Rock Lighthouse was building. The boat which held the workers was moored near the rock when a violent storm arose. The danger was lest the mooring-rope should break and the boat be carried out to sea, or smashed to pieces against the rock. For many hours they were in jeopardy, while the passengers sat trembling in the cabin unable to venture on deck for the heavy seas, and knowing nothing of what was going on around them, but fearing the worst. Then a little boy, who afterwards related the story, crept up on deck and there he saw what dissipated all his fears. The storm seemed, to his eyes, as bad as ever, but on the deck lashed to his post stood the watchman—and there was a smile upon his face.

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

John xv. 5.—'I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.'

Our Lord's discourse on the True Vine was spoken immediately after the institution of the Holy Supper. The last words of the preceding chapter, 'Arise, let us go hence,' would seem to indicate that at that point the disciples rose from the table and left the upper room. In accordance with this it has been suggested that the discourse which follows might very fitly have been spoken on the road to Gethsemane. 'It is almost a mile's walk from the house of the Last Supper—down the stair street, past the fountain of Siloam, out of the water gate, turning to the left up the valley of the Kidron, past the priestly tombs, under the great mass of the temple—to the Garden of Gethsemane. They walked between gardens, where just at that time, according to custom, the vines were being trimmed, the cuttings from which had been thrown into the street to wither. You have in the account of Jesus' discourse on the way one of those unconscious eye-witness pictures of the surroundings; how, as they walked down that street, they trod on these withering vine branches, and saw the vine stocks from which they had been cut. It was this which suggested, and from which Jesus took, the striking and vivid figures for the parable of the vine.' [1]

The truth here taught is in general the same as that taught in the Holy Supper, though it is also complementary to it. Both are designed to impress on us the utter need of living union with Christ, He in us and we in Him. But while the Bread suggests nourishment the Vine suggests fruit-bearing. We are not bidden come to Christ in order that we may eat of the fruit of the True Vine, but in order that, as branches, we ourselves may bear fruit. We come to Him, not merely for what we can get, but for what He can enable us to do. We come, not merely because we are hungry and thirsty, but because our lives are barren and fruitless. He is the moral stem of humanity, on whom we all depend for every power of good that is in us. Only as we abide in Him can we hope to accomplish any good at all.

[1] J. P. Peters, *Bible and Spade*, 237.

This is doctrine which we find it hard to receive. For we naturally think of ourselves as being each one an independent centre of life and energy. We commend and cultivate the spirit of self-reliance. We have been accustomed to pride ourselves on the progress made in modern times by human energy and initiative, and to set practically no limits to what man by himself can achieve. In particular we belong to a masterful race which has been wont to exult in its native vigour and independence. Nothing, then, could more flatly contradict the spirit of our age and nation than our Lord's word here, 'Without me ye can do nothing.' It may be, however, that in these days of disillusionment which have followed the World War, when Western civilization seems to have reached the end of its resources and human statesmanship is almost ready to declare its bankruptcy, the nations may be more willing to give ear to the word of Christ, and in a chastened spirit to come to Him that we may have life.

I

The True Vine

'I am the vine, ye are the branches.' It is very noteworthy how our Lord lays hold on the simplest things, the things which are most necessary to life, and makes them emblems of Himself. 'I am the bread of life,' He says. 'I am the light of the world; I am the way, the truth and the life.' So here, 'I am the true vine.' By all these emblems He expresses His claim to be absolutely indispensable to the world and vital to the life of men. It is a claim which no other has ever dared to make. Prophets and religious leaders have arisen declaring themselves to be the bringers of a divine message. They have boldly asserted the utter truth and authority of their message, but they have distinguished between that message and their own personality. They have been ready to say with John the Baptist, 'I am a voice crying in the wilderness.' Had any of them gone beyond that and preached himself as utterly indispens-

able to men, his claim would at once have been rejected with scorn and anger by all reasonable men. But now it is on record that not the first disciples only but multitudes throughout the Christian ages have humbly and thankfully acknowledged the great claim of Christ. So far have they been from resenting and rejecting that claim, that they have joyfully welcomed it and rejoiced in it as their one hope of deliverance and eternal life. And why? Because they have proved in their own experience that Christ, being received by faith, is indeed the strength of their hearts and their hope of glory. They have found in Him a source of life and power beyond their own.

This has a bearing, in the first place, upon our physical life. We are apt to overlook the teaching of the New Testament which consistently affirms that Christ is the agent in creation as well as in redemption. 'All things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made.' So without Him no created being could continue to exist. Our natural powers are literally part of the creative energy of Christ, which flows through our bodies and limbs as the sap of the vine flows through the branches. Without Him we could not move hand or foot, speak a word or think a thought. Should He withdraw His vital energy from us we should not only die but even cease to be. Something approaching, if not amounting to, annihilation would follow. We should return—body, mind, and spirit—to that nothingness out of which we came at the Creator's call. We do well to remember that all those natural powers, which we regard as our very own and which constitute our very manhood, are in truth the gift of Christ who has been pleased, according to His wise and gracious purpose, to call us into life and sustain us from day to day.

Our Lord, however, is here speaking chiefly of our spiritual relation to Him and of our spiritual life and work. He declares Himself to be the living fountain of all our spiritual energies. He is the vine, we are the branches. Severed from Him no good can be accomplished, no spiritual life can exist. He is the moral stem of humanity and all fruits of goodness and virtue that are manifest in the world, wrought by various individuals in various ways, are all the product of His living spirit pouring itself into human hearts and supplying the energy whereby they live. St Paul teaches the same truth in his parable of the body and its members. All the various members of the body, though they have different endowments and different functions to fulfil, are yet all one body and draw their life and power from one central source. 'So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.'

Our life, then, is a branch life. It is derivative, dependent, incomplete in itself. Cicero, the Roman moralist, remarks in his essay on the Divine nature that no wise man ever thanked God for his virtues, because his virtues are his own achievement. 'We are praised for our virtues,' he continues, 'and we boast of them, which we could not do if our virtues were the gift of God and not from ourselves.' That is the judgment of the natural mind. 'Our good deeds are our own and we are entitled to take credit for them.' But very different is the language of the heart enlightened by the Holy Spirit. All the good in us is of Christ, down to the very roots of thought and will.

Every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness
Are His alone.

II

The Severed Branch

In view of all this we see that true life apart from Christ is impossible and hopeless in its issue. Our Lord leaves us in no doubt as to that. 'If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.' The man who without dependence on Christ goes to work 'on his own,' will prove in the end to have done nothing and to be good for nothing.

'Without me (or more literally, 'severed from me') ye can do nothing.' Observe, our Lord does not merely say that our work will be of inferior quality, but that it will be no work at all. It will have no enduring value. It simply won't count in the final grand result. The warning was first given to the Apostles as they were about to go forth to win the world, a task manifestly beyond their powers. Had Peter gone forth trusting to his native energy and powers of leadership, had Paul trusted to the massiveness of his thinking, or John to the depth of

his spiritual insight, all would have been found utterly inadequate. There must go forth with them, to accompany and enforce their word, the very power of the living Christ. So we find them, earnestly and with united voice, disclaiming all power of their own, and confessing that all of good they do is done by the spirit of Christ. The Acts of the Apostles, as they themselves are the first to acknowledge, are verily the Acts of the living Christ.

Every preacher of the gospel is taught sooner or later, however slow and reluctant he be to learn, the lesson of his own impotence. He sets out with laudable ambitions, and perhaps a fairly high opinion of what he can achieve for the Kingdom of God. He has confidence in his own way of putting the truth, and in this or that method of Christian work. No doubt there is a measure of faith in Christ and a looking to Him for blessing, but mingled with that there is much of the self-confidence of youth, and of what in Scripture is called 'trust in an arm of flesh.' So the great lesson has to be learnt—of human impotence. It is a solemn and a bitter experience to preach to those who perceive the message unmoved, to exhort and beseech men who, so far from receiving the word, take no apparent interest in it whatsoever. Then slowly it is burnt into the preacher's soul, 'I can do nothing. I am powerless to touch these hearts and change these lives.' And so, with an ever deepening sense of his own impotence, the preacher is driven back on Christ. He begins to realize that there is a depth of meaning hitherto undreamed of in these words, 'Without me ye can do nothing.' Time and again, doubtless, he will forget them or rebel against them, and only as the crowning act of his sanctification will he heartily acquiesce in them. Yet if there is to be any fruit of his ministry that shall endure unto eternal life it must come by the living power of Christ working through him, and not by any virtue or effort of his own.

The same lesson needs to be learnt by every one who seeks in any way to work good among his fellow-men. To all alike the Master's word is, 'Without me ye can do nothing.' How very far are we from believing it! How multifarious are the schemes we engage in for the benefit of the community, how vast the numbers of earnest men and women labouring for the public good! And no doubt in return for all this lavish expenditure of human energy there is much apparent fruit to show, much that is commonly reckoned success. But the question still remains to be answered, how much of permanent good is done? what fruit will endure to eternal life? All that is not wrought in dependence on Christ will come to nothing in the end, however brave a show it may make in the meantime.

Do we put our finger here upon the source of the Church's impotence? Do we find in this the secret of the terrible catastrophe which has overtaken our western civilization? Is Christ showing us to-day that all human work, though wrought on the most imposing scale, comes to nothing apart from Him? Those must be blind indeed who do not see in the world crisis an evidence that some vital thing has been wanting, the lack of which has brought confusion and ruin upon the nations. A celebrated explorer on the upper Amazon tells how, when compelled to make a succession of forced marches, his carriers went well for two days, but on the morning of the third day he found them seated on the ground motionless. The head man, on being asked for the reason, said, 'They are waiting. They cannot move till their souls have caught up with their bodies.' Finding themselves faint, with no heart for the road, they assumed in their primitive way that their bodies had outrun their spirits. Do we not at times find ourselves in similar plight? St John (Jn. ix.) says that the man who drives ahead (*προάγων*) without Christ loses God. It will be our wisdom in such a case, when the heart has gone out of us and our strength fails, if like these primitive folk we call a halt and wait till the Spirit return to us to revive us again.

Severed from Christ, not only can we do nothing, but we are good for nothing. The branch once severed from the vine is doomed to wither and is fit only to be burnt. Ezekiel (xv. 3) points out that the unfruitful vine is good for nothing. No use can be made of its wood, not so much as a peg to drive into the wall. With the vine it is fruit or the fire. So our Lord gives the plain warning that the unfruitful branch, having ceased to be of value to God, will assuredly be cast out and consumed.

III

The Fruitful Branch

Fruit is the one thing which the vine-dresser seeks. By fruit is here meant some product of

eternal value, some result of our life and work which will contribute to the Kingdom of God. All else is really worthless, like the 'wood and hay and stubble' which the Apostle says will be burnt up in God's great day. The Divine intention for every life is that it should be fruitful in this sense. With this end in view God brought each of us into the world and sustains us in life. It is this also which goes far to explain His dealings with us. He is the Husbandman who prunes the fruitful branch that it may bring forth more fruit. The pruning is inevitably sharp and painful, but the Husbandman does not hesitate nor spare, because the vintage will be richer. Surely when we understand this we shall more willingly leave ourselves in His hands. For we would fain bring forth fruit unto God. We feel the vanity of much of our human labour. It seems but little better than ploughing the sand or writing upon the water. We would fain achieve something of permanent value, bear some precious fruit from which the Master's hand shall press the wine of heaven.

Now the essential condition of fruit-bearing is to abide in the Vine. 'As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.' We know how necessary it is to keep in touch with any one whose mind and purpose we desire to know and with whom we would co-operate. In our relation to Christ we need a far closer union, not merely to keep in touch with Him—a phrase which suggests only an external contact—but to abide in Him and He in us. This union of spirits must be continually maintained by prayer and the surrender of the will to Him. A young artist once complained to the poet Blake that the power of invention had forsaken him. Blake turned to his wife and said, 'It is just so with us, is it not, for weeks together, when the visions forsake us? What do we do then?' 'We kneel down and pray,' she replied. There we have the secret of his inspiration. In his famous hymn he passionately cries:

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

In dark days he waited on God, sending up swift arrows of desire till the clouds broke and he was rapt away in the Spirit as in a chariot of fire.

Abiding in Christ, as the branch in the vine, we become channels for the outflow of His Spirit, and the fruits of the Spirit are wrought in us, not by any strain and effort, but as a natural product. This is the highest form of goodness. Marcus Aurelius describes the truly good man as one who 'does not even know what he has done, but is like a vine which has produced grapes, and seeks for nothing more after it has once produced its proper fruit. Like the bee when it has made the honey, so when he has done a good act he does not call for others to come and see, but goes on to another act, as a vine goes on to produce again the grapes in season.' This is the truth which the Reformers had in view when they stressed the point that, while good works do not make a good man, the good man does good works as the natural outcome of the spirit within him. Even so it is. All that is truly good in the world, all work of eternal value, is wrought by the power of the indwelling Christ, and without Him no enduring good can be wrought at all. Amid the grave confusions of our time, therefore, when so many of the proudest works of man have been brought to nought, when human foresight fails and human energy is faced with tasks which seem beyond its strength, there is a call to us to preach with greater insistence than ever the utter need and the all-sufficiency of Christ. At the same time there is a call to us to abide in Him ourselves, to seek His help in all we undertake, to depend wholly upon His grace so that we may truly live and bear fruit to the glory of God.

J. H. Morrison

How Joy Comes

John xv. 11.—'These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.'

Man is ever a lover of joy; he feels he is made for it; he is distressed when he misses it or is robbed of it. He looks his best when he is inspired by it, and does his best when he is filled with it. It is unnatural for him to be without it, and he soon loses gaiety, health, and wisdom if he cannot recover it. God, then, must give him joy. And yet it must be con-

fessed that though nearly all men are happy at times, there are not many whom we should call joyful. What is it that hinders? On what does joy really depend?

1. *Love.*—Joy depends on love, the sense of being loved and trusted by the best. Shelley and many another have plucked flower after flower from human life, careless of the damage they did them, because they wanted to be loved by the beautiful. But neither he nor any other who has trodden that path has found joy. The love of the best human beings is necessarily imperfect and subject, so far as its expression is concerned, to health, freedom from worry, and amazing patience. Human love is an immense help, inspiring self-respect, and often stimulating as well as comforting. Yet it constantly fails in chasing away the gloom with which death, separation, solitude, sickness, and anxiety inspire us.

But where human love fails Divine love succeeds. Christ's love is as personal as that of the lover, as watchful as that of the mother, as constant as that of the friend; and besides all this has the strength, the wisdom, and the greatness of God. It is big enough to take in the whole human race, and individual enough to weep at the grave of Lazarus. It necessarily gives joy where it is received, and sometimes of such a tumultuous character that heart and mind are strained in their efforts to respond. 'I prayed to God,' says Francis Xavier, 'to restrain the overflowing fullness of joy which constantly fills my soul.' With this the disciples were familiar. He had been everything to them. His attention to their personal needs —'Lacked ye anything?'—His care in instructing them, His watchfulness over their moods, His joy in hearing what they had to say, made them see how He cared for them. Sometimes they would be daring enough to imagine that He loved them. That He was the Vine and they the branches was not so difficult for them as for us, for they owed everything to Him—food and clothing for the body, and power for the spirit.

But this was not all. It was going far beyond the bounds of what we may call family affection when He said: 'Abide in me, and I in you.' No human being had ever expressed himself like that. It would have been natural for them to have said, Master, stay with us, and let us stay with Thee, as St Peter said on the night of the Transfiguration. But it is He, their Master, who urges them to stay in Him and let Him stay in them. He it is who presses on them this natural affection and points to the miserable failure that any interruption of their friendship would mean to them. He it is who urges all the advantages to character and to the honour of His Father which their continuance with Him would mean. With some, such tender, unreserved pleading would lead to the supposition that they were absolutely necessary to His plans, that He couldn't do without them; but these, except Judas, had so much benefited by His discipline and instruction that the words left them wondering at the graciousness of His condescension, and filled them with an extraordinary joy that He had ever thought them worthy of such deep regard.

Now, if we can receive it, such teaching will do the same for us. We start in the same way as the disciples; they did not choose Him, nor have we. He chose them, and He also chose us. The words, then, of His teaching are as apposite to us as to them. The appeal is just the same—'Abide in me, and I in you.' But they do not grip now as they did then. We have not so sufficiently understood our life as to find, as they did, tokens of regard on every hand, signs, ministries, teachings unmistakable. We have had our communions, or hours of abiding, precious moments which we left when the service was over, and consequently, beyond the vague sense that He loves everyone and therefore us, we are uncertain.

We must therefore get back to our Lord's own words: 'I am the vine, ye are the branches.' The very fact that dry, unfruitful branches are included and specially referred to ought to assure us that our inclusion in the Vine is not due to merit. We are there; we know not why, and we must believe it. And all that belongs to the Vine—its beauty, its fruitfulness, the joy it gives to the husbandman—is ours. We belong to the family of God—and are heirs to all the promises. And beyond that, inexplicable as it may seem to be, we are the objects of the love of the greatest, wisest, and purest —the Son of Man.

We have, then, the unshakable conviction that, dull as we are to the world, we are very interesting to Him; misunderstood as we are

by most people, we are always understood by Him; that, indifferent as we know our acquaintances to be to our trials and difficulties, they are always matters of concern to Him. To be sure of this is and must be an amazing joy. Our Lord tells us to start with this knowledge and then 'abide in it,' never let it go.

¶ G. K. Chesterton, in his *Life of St Francis*, says: 'What gave him his extraordinary personal power was this: that from the Pope to the beggar, from the Sultan of Syria in his pavilion to the ragged robbers crawling out of the wood, there was never a man who looked into those brown, burning eyes without being certain that Francis Bernardone was really interested in him; in his own inner individual life from the cradle to the grave; that he himself was being valued and taken seriously, and not merely added to the spoils of some social policy or to the names in some clerical document.'

2. *Society.*—But there is another source of joy. We are social beings. Solitude is odious to us. We naturally love society. And Christ, unlike so many leaders and teachers, who like to keep their favourite pupils and followers to themselves, provided a Society for us wherein we could find that social intercourse which inspires joy. This Society has an immense roll of membership, and on it the names of the greatest sovereigns, the wisest philosophers, the ablest scientists, the most accomplished artists and musicians, the most unselfish philanthropists the world has known. The fact that it is so easy to be a member, and that so many are members who have no care for it, has disparaged its estimation. But there it is, the only Catholic Society there is, for there are no distinctions, neither race nor sex nor birth, and the only Society in which it is the habitual custom for its members all alike to receive of the great Loving Cup of their Lord's Body and Blood. Not only is Christ the Vine, but the Church is the Vine. For the true vine, by its tendrils, its self-sacrificing love, not only draws us to the Father and to Jesus, but to one another. Vines not only cling to their own support, but often twine round one another, and thus make of the whole vineyard one great bower of mutual interlacing leaves.

It is true the Church as we know it does not present very many attractions. It is spoilt through selfish members using it for their own advantage, and through a natural tendency to measure its greatness by the little bit we know. But now and again, as on All Saints' Day, we realize its glory, the long line of witnesses stretching through the centuries, and on other occasions, as on a missionary festival, its power as we look at the great deeds that are done in the most unlikely places. And beside all this there is no one who does not bless the Church for the friends she has given him, the best he ever had. There is no doubt we ought to have more joy out of this fellowship than we have. It is not Christ's fault, but partly the fault of our own narrow prejudices, and partly that of the Church in not making better provision to satisfy the social needs of her members.

¶ Again and again complaint has reached me from young men who have come up to London to seek their fortune; they have left home and friends and all companionship behind them, and have come up to hard toil in this grasping, grinding city. They are cut off from all the enjoyments and amenities of a young man's natural life; and the Church is just the place where they might find what they need. The Church might supply a young man with these natural enjoyments, all the more delightful because they would be pure and good. But *does* the Church? That is the point. Again and again it has been said to me, 'I have found such and such a church; I like the preaching and the ritual; I make my Communions there; but I don't know anybody. Nobody has shown me any help; nobody has said anything to me; nobody is interested in me.' Well, *there* is a way in which every one of us could do something to realize the social ideal of the Catholic Church. We could stretch out the right hand of fellowship to our brother-worshippers, and do something to break down a little of our national English stiffness and shyness, and enable people to realize—what, as a matter of fact, they do feel in their hearts—the bond which unites all those who meet together in the mystical Body of Christ.[1]

3. *Purpose.*—But perhaps the greatest source of joy comes through the knowledge of what our Lord aims at effecting in us. The purpose of the vine is to produce fruit; that is its object. And the purpose of Christ is to produce char-

[1] G. W. E. Russell.

acter, character like to His own. It is not good works that He seeks, but good fruit. Now, as no one can have a continual feast of gladness who is barren and unfruitful, so he cannot be a stranger to true happiness who is fulfilling the great end of existence and bringing forth the fruit of a holy and useful life. The thought that Christ has us in hand, and that He will not cease His endeavours before He has made each one of us perfect after our measure is, perhaps, the most uplifting thought we can know. We rejoice when our health is improving, still more when we are becoming more proficient in our work and business; but the greatest joy comes from the belief that He is transforming our character. Naturally we do not see it, for with every improvement there comes a clearer knowledge of our increasing need of it. We are like the pianist, who, whilst thankful for the enjoyment he gives others, yet is not without some discontent as he realizes with every step he takes how much further he has to go. So with us. We lament our slow progress, sometimes feeling it is no good going on; and then He says to us: Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his stature? If, then, ye are not able to do that which is least, why are ye anxious concerning the rest? Worrying and fretting will not help. All you have to do is to abide in Me, and then the progress comes of itself.

But all is not done in a moment. 'All real work is slow, and all true development by minute, slight, and insensible metamorphoses. And the higher the structure the slower the progress. As the biologist runs his eyes over the long ascent of life, he sees the lowest form of animals develop in an hour; the next above these reach maturity in a day; those higher still take weeks or months to perfect; but the few at the top demand the long experiment of years. . . . As the man is to the animal in the slowness of his evolution, so is the spiritual man to the natural man. Foundations that have to bear the weight of an eternal life must be surely laid. If character is to wear for ever, who will wonder or grudge that it cannot be developed in a day?' But however slow, provided we do not throw ourselves away, the issue is sure.

¶ Aristotle lays it down, says Tauler, 'that God and Nature are not unprofitable workers, but what they work at they carry to its end. And God created man that He might have pleasure in him.'

There is, of course, much in this character-making that we do not understand and do not like. 'Every branch in me that bears fruit he cleanseth it, that it may bring more fruit.' His discipline, like that of the surgeon or skilled teacher, is designed to perfect the moral character.

¶ A fourteenth-century mystic puts it thus, 'God has bestowed as much care and thought in the arrangement of each single thing as the artist does when he is painting a picture, who never draws a single stroke with his pencil without considering how long, how short, and how broad it ought to be; and it must be so and no otherwise if the picture is to be a perfect masterpiece, and all its bright red and blue colours are to come out. But God takes a thousand times more pains with us than the artist with his picture. By many touches of sorrow and by many colours of circumstance He brings man into the form which is the highest and noblest in His sight, if only we receive His gifts and myrrh (of discipline) in the right spirit.'

This does not, or rather should not, mean depression and sadness. Christ's best scholars have been so sure of this that they have learnt with St Paul to rejoice in infirmities and distresses. At first this seems startling, but we know how the great adventurers have, in spite of toil and suffering, experienced great exhilaration. Periods of depression have been pushed aside, humour and light-heartedness have sprung up as from a secret spring. They have had their joy. The discovery of the other life is a far greater and more exciting quest. If it imposes on all who make it patience, discipline, and hardihood, the assurance that we have a Companion on the way ought to be an increasing stimulus and give the buoyancy and cheerfulness that always distinguishes the good traveller. The more so that we know no leader loved his men, no general his army, as He. The atmosphere may at times be chilly, the road dull, but His love makes up for it all.

The Joy of Christ

John xv. 11.—'My joy.'

1. The world has never been able to understand the joy of Jesus Christ or even to believe in it. The general world and the Church alike have known Him as the Man of sorrows, and it would

surprise and shock many good Christians to hear Him spoken of as the Man of joy. In fact, that larger, deeper element has been overlooked because it was both too deep and too unearthly for the superficial eye. The favours of fortune, the flatteries of ambition, the caresses of wealth had no place in His daily path. Externally it was such a life as the least favoured of mortals would not change for his own. Externally it was a rough, bare, pinched life with no bright colours on its face, and no romance to paint its sky. And yet underneath all that was a very heavenful of what He called joy, as much deeper than pleasure as the ocean is deeper than a pool. His joy was the wonderful thing in Christ's life. A river of satisfaction clear as crystal, running to ceaseless music and never running low.

2. Now is it possible for us to know the source and contents of this joy? Was it part of the mystery of His Divine nature and therefore beyond human comprehension? No: it could not be altogether that, or He would hardly have prayed that we might be sharers in it. Indeed He Himself has told us in part what it was and whence it came.

(1) One of the sources of His joy was the fullness of life which He possessed. It is remarkable how often that word *fullness* is brought in as descriptive of the Lord. We all know how when physical life is full, its concomitant and sacrament is joy. We see that on every hand in Nature; we see it in the healthy little child. And when one thinks of the inner life of Christ, and of the fullness that characterized that inner life, one begins to understand His joy. Morally He was in perfect poise with heaven. Spiritually He had the fullness of the Spirit. No slightest disobedience to the highest ever cast its shadow on His soul, and that fullness of His inward life, like the fullness of physical life in Nature, had its concomitant and sacrament in joy. I am come, He said, that others might have life, and that they might have it *abundantly*. He came to give what He Himself possessed. And that abundant life, rooted in His sinlessness and continually enriched by new obedience, was one of the splendid secrets of His joy.

(2) Another never-failing source was His abiding in His Father's love. We see that very clearly in the verse which immediately precedes the text. From it we gather that the joy of Jesus was rooted in the presence of the Father, realized every moment that He lived. There is a well-known story of Edward Irving, how once, walking on the hills at Annan, he met a shepherd with a joyless look, and said to him quietly, 'Do you know the Father?' And some years afterwards, in the streets of Annan, when Irving had forgotten all about it, the shepherd, with gladness in his face, came up to him and said, '*I know the Father now, sir.*' That shepherd had passed out of his isolation into the great fellowship of God. He had moved out of all his worrying care into the calming certainty of love. And in a vision of that love unparalleled, the Good Shepherd lived and toiled and died, and that was one great secret of His joy. To Him it was a shelter from the storm and a shadow from the heat of life. It comforted His heart when men were mocking Him. It sustained Him in the hour of agony. His joy was not only rooted in His fullness, it was rooted in the love of heaven, which to *Him*, every moment that He lived, was closer than breathing, nearer than hands or feet.

¶ The piety of Addison was, in truth, of a singularly cheerful character. God was to him the all-wise and all-powerful friend who had watched over his cradle with more than maternal tenderness; who had listened to his cries before they could form themselves in prayer; who had preserved his youth from the snares of vice; who had made his cup run over with worldly blessings; who had doubled the value of those blessings, by bestowing a thankful heart to enjoy them, and dear friends to partake them. . . . Of the Psalms, his favourite was that which represents the Ruler of all things under the endearing image of a shepherd, whose crook guides the flock safe, through gloomy and desolate glens, to meadows well watered and rich with herbage. On that goodness to which he ascribed all the happiness of his life, he relied in the hour of death with the love which casteth out fear.[1]

(3) His joy was redemptive as well as filial. He felt that he had come to heal a diseased world; that He was sent as a physician whose great profession was to go about amongst men giving light to those in darkness and strength to the weak; bringing new blood to those that were dead, and quickening humanity. And out

[1] Lord Macaulay, *Critical and Historical Essays*, 743.

of this there came a deep and true joy. Goodness is said to be dull and uninteresting. So it is if it is merely negative, but let it be goodness that fights wrong, suffers for others, solves social problems, opens the minds of men to light and truth, infuses itself into the souls of others, and it will be full of charm and overflowing with delight.

¶ Keble, talking of sad people, says, 'When you find yourself overpowered, as it were, by melancholy, the best way is to go out and do something kind to somebody.'

I think this is the authentic sign and seal
Of Godship, that it ever waxes glad,
And more glad, until gladness blossoms, bursts,
Into a rage to suffer for mankind,
And recommence at sorrow: drops like seed,
After the blossom, ultimate of all.[1]

(4) We must not forget one other source: it was His entire surrender to vocation. Our Lord gave Himself, in utter self-surrender, to the task appointed Him of God. The first impression which the Gospels make on us is that of the freedom of the life of Jesus. He moves hither and thither in sweet liberty. Like the song of the thrush, His words are unpremeditated. And then we read more closely and discover that through all the various freedom of that life, like the throb of the screw in some great ocean liner, is the throb of a sovereign dominating purpose. 'I come to do thy will, O God. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me. I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.' And that devotion, that utter self-surrender, that dedication to a high vocation, was for *Him*, as it is for every man, one of the deep sources of His joy. It was just because our blessed Lord so gave Himself to a vocation which led Him to the Cross, that 'God, even his God, anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows.'

¶ When Bishop Hannington was only a curate in Devonshire, he gave himself to Christ, and was at length able to write, 'I know now that Jesus Christ died for me, and that He is mine, and I am His.' He had surrendered himself wholly to Christ. 'I am His.' Now look at the love that broadened and deepened in the self-surrendered soul. In 1882 he started from the coast of Africa for the interior. He was beset with difficulties, but the love within him was unmoved. On the 1st of August he wrote the beautiful, triumphant words, 'I am very happy. Fever is trying, *but it does not take away the joy of the Lord*, and keeps me low in the right place.'[1]

[1] Browning.

The Greater Love

John xv. 13.—'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'

1. Love unto death—no man has greater love than that, but many men have less. It is this love of the brotherhood, which dares all, gives all, that the world needs. It is this that the world cannot resist. We find among men a cynicism and hardness and indifference and selfishness that seem to baffle us continually; but the baffiement for which we too easily blame the world not seldom has its true explanation in our own hearts. There is lack of love—this greater love, that can get right down beneath the hard and unresponsive strata of human character, and find a living response in that which all but love has found unresponsive.

But, we are told, men sneer at love, and say there is no room for it. And when we think of the noisy self-seeking and mean ideals of the day it does seem as if love were being crowded out. There appears to be some reasonableness in the plea that a man cannot afford to listen to the voice of love or obey its commandments. A soft heart is too expensive a luxury for the world as men find it. That is the worldly dictum, boldly uttered here and there, secretly believed in many places. But there are moments when most men suspect, and hours when some men come to know once for all, that what they say about love is a terrible and a ghastly mistake—if it is nothing worse. Love will always be the highest and the most availing thing in the life of the world—and after that, for 'love never faileth.'

Ay, and when Prophecy her tale hath finished,
Knowledge hath withered from the trembling tongue,
Love shall survive, and Love be undiminished,
Love be imperishable, Love be young.

And if the one thing in human life that shall live on, endlessly satisfying, is love, it seems

[1] J. A. Clapperton.

strange that love should ever fail to win the world's reverence and its heart—strange that men should sneer at love. But do they? That statement needs to be qualified. The thing at which men sneer, as well they may, is a certain cheap, indeterminate, timorous sentiment that poses as love, and leaves a tired and sorrowful world unhelped and uncomforted. But the greater love, the love that lays down its life, quietly, simply, always—no man ever saw this and sneered at it. No man ever looked this love in the face, and saw all that was written there, and made a mockery of it.

But what about Him whose name was Love, and whose life was love? Did they not mock Him, crucify Him? Yes, but we remember what He Himself said: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' If they had seen all there was to see, they would never have done what they did. None but the blind could ever have put a crown of thorns on the brow of love. And love has always been willing to wear it, for love knows that men often fail to recognize her till they have pressed down that crown upon her brow. The world has always made love suffer, and yet it is the traces of that same suffering in the face of love that soonest tell men what love is and bring them to her feet. It is true they mocked the Man of Love and crucified Him. But it is just as true that He hath a name that is above every name; and the anthem of His praise is surely spreading through the world. And it shall be given to all who learn to love as He loved, and to share in His victory. For the world is bound in the end to listen to the voice of the greater love—whose robe is sympathy, and whose work is self-sacrifice. There is a soft, strong, masterful compulsion in the voice of all real sacrifice that men cannot quite get away from, and which, at some time in his life, every man is unspeakably glad to hear. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life.' That is where all the emphasis falls. 'Lay down his life.' That is a perfect picture of the greater love.

2. What is laying life down? It has meant and it might mean again, looking quietly into the grey face of death. Men have done that out of their heart's brave, selfless love, and the story of their love is one of the undenied treasures of human history. But that is a very imperfect view of the great principle of which these words speak. The principle of sacrifice folded in our Saviour's words does not find its full illustration in some act of tragic self-devotion, nor in the long tragedy of resignation. It is something nearer to common experience and necessity than these things. One has said:

> 'Tis as hard at duty's call,
> To lay one's life down day by day,
> As to lay it down once for all.

Yes, that is it. Laying life down day by day. Always doing it. To live, not for our own pleasures, but to make gladness more possible for such as walk in the shadows of many sorrows, in order to make goodness more possible for such as stand in the tense darkness of great temptations, to set others ever first, to pass into the life of the world each day to minister and not to be ministered unto—this is the greater love, and they who do these things have heard it speak. The music of its message has got into their hearts, and now nothing else will satisfy them. Now they know that the wealth of life is its outpouring; and that the one priceless treasure for humanity's finding and wearing is the heart's unselfishness.

Nineteen hundred years ago there was lived in Galilee and Judæa a life that is to-day transforming humanity. That life had but one secret, and it was this: I lay down My life. No man taketh it from Me. I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. That love is the reason for ours. St John says: 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren' (1 John iii. 16). In the very next breath we find the Apostle talking about a man who knew that his neighbour was hungry, and would not give him bread, though he had the means to do so. That links together the greater love and daily bread. We too often associate the idea of the greater love with life's most extreme and tragic possibilities. We need it then, but we also need it now. The greater love not only meets great occasions, it makes them. There are no commonplaces in the life of sacrifice.

¶ In one of his essays Mr Augustine Birrell says: 'In early manhood Coleridge planned a Pantisocracy where all the virtues were to thrive. Lamb did something far more difficult:

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he played cribbage every night with his imbecile father, whose constant stream of querulous talk and fault-finding might well have goaded a far stronger man into practising and justifying neglect. To a contemporary stranger it might well have appeared as if his life were a frivolous one and useless as compared with those of these philosophers and thinkers. . . . But to us, looking back upon that little group, and knowing what we now do about each member of it, no such mistake is possible. To us it is plain beyond all question that, judged by whatever standard of excellence it is possible for any reasonable human being to take, Lamb stands head and shoulders a better man than any of them.'

Our Lord's last words to His disciple John were these: 'Behold, thy mother.' The word that came to St John in the hour of his Master's supreme agony was a word that laid on him the duty of caring for a lonely and broken-hearted woman, to whom life had said its cruellest words. The shadow of the Cross lay upon all the service that he thereafter rendered to Mary. Do we see what it means? Do we read the lesson of it? It means that the voice of the love that loved us unto death speaks to us in all life's common ministries of toil and service. We need that one supreme tragedy of pain and patience and love to keep our speech gracious, and our judgment pure, and our heart tender, and our will serviceable day by day.

The Perfect Friendship

John xv. 15.—'No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you' (R.V.).

When Christ says to His disciples, 'No longer do I call you servants,' He is not cancelling the relationship which has hitherto subsisted between Him and them. He is setting aside none of His dignity and authority. 'Ye call me teacher, and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.' These titles retain all their force. And the Apostles never cease to glory in the fact that He is for ever the Master, and they for ever the servants. 'Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ.' 'James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.' And when John was spending his years of exile in the island of Patmos, and there received glimpses of the unseen and eternal world with its conditions, it was revealed to him that the old relationship to Christ is enduring. 'And his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads.' We therefore dismiss the idea that Christ thinks of rescinding an iota of His lordship.

But what He does say is that lordship is not all. He is about to send His disciples out into the vast world to undertake the greatest task ever entrusted to human beings—the founding of His Kingdom on earth. He commissions them to go to humanity, with all its sin, all its culture, all its hoary faiths and superstitions, and to conquer it for Him. And ere He sends them away, He assures them that they go not only as His servants but as His friends. He gives them all the joy and power of this revelation. He wishes their ministry to be for ever irradiated by a Divine friendship.

1. It was Christ's purpose that His friendship with all His followers should be based upon a perfect mutual understanding. 'I have called you friends,' He said to His disciples, 'for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you.' He makes a clear distinction between two things which are both admirable—service and friendship. He never utters a disparaging word about service. He says elsewhere that it is good and faithful servants who enter into the joy of their lord. But He plainly indicates that there is something higher than service. There is a nearer and dearer relationship, into which it is the privilege of all His disciples to enter. To this He bids them aspire. A servant is one who receives his instructions at the beginning of the day, is expected to carry them out to the letter, whether he understands their scope and purpose or not. He may or may not have a personal interest in his work, he may or may not sympathize with his master's aims; in either case his obligation is perfect obedience. And Christianity has often been illustrated by the familiar words, 'Theirs not to reason why, theirs not to make reply.' The soldier's life of service certainly displays the absolute ideal of implicit, unquestioning obedience. But there is something higher than that. With all reverence the followers of Christ may say, 'Ours *is* to reason why, ours *is* to make reply.' Their Lord Himself so wills it. He is

their Teacher as well as their Master, and they know that while they dare not set aside any moral imperative which He addresses to their conscience, a blind, unintelligent submission is the last thing that He desires of them. During His years of familiar intercourse with the Twelve, He listened to a thousand questions and answers. He encouraged them to state all their difficulties and reason everything out. He sought to make His revelation perfectly clear to their minds: He wished their service to be based on an ever-increasing enlightenment. They were students at once of His life and of His teaching, to whom He told all His secrets, explained all His purposes, unfolded all His ideals, in so far as they were 'able to bear' the instruction; and at the end He could say to them, 'No longer do I call you servants, but I have called you friends, for *all things* that I heard of my Father I have made known to you.' Christ wishes every follower of His to consider the facts of Christianity again and again till they become sun-clear to his intelligence, till they beget the fullest persuasion in his own mind. Thus the servant of Christ becomes His friend.

2. Scarcely any words are adequate to present the effects of this Divine friendship. It is redeeming, uplifting, purifying, transfiguring. Human friendship at its best has always something redemptive in it. It is related that Charles Kingsley was once asked by Mrs Browning, 'What is your secret?' Her question meant, 'What is it that explains you, that accounts for all that is highest, noblest, best in you, that makes you the man, the writer, the teacher you are?' He answered very simply and sufficiently, 'I had a friend.' At the critical time of his career, when life's great decisions were being made, when character was being moulded for better or for worse, God in His good providence gave him a wise and true friend, who in some sense embodied for him the Christian ideal, so that he ever afterwards felt that that friendship was the determining factor in his personal experience. And Kingsley gives us all, in our choice of friends, a somewhat strange and startling advice. He advises us to choose those of whom we are at first rather afraid, that is, those in whose presence we dare not speak a false word or do a base deed, those whom we shall reverence as well as love, whose example will encourage and stimulate us to whatsoever things are true and lovely and of good report. We naturally and inevitably become like that which we sincerely and cordially admire. And if a human friendship does so much, what can a Divine friendship not do? If we abide in uninterrupted fellowship with Christ, we come to have the mind of our Divine Friend. It has often been noted that the husband and wife who have shared each other's inmost thoughts and feelings for half a lifetime grow like each other. Montaigne, with tender memories of a youthful friend who was his *alter ego*, writes wistfully of the 'sacrament' of friendship, but he had too little faith to realize his own fine conception. Christ calls all His followers to participate in a Divine friendship which consummates itself by making them partakers of His Divine nature.

This Divine and redeeming friendship is, of course, lasting. It is everlasting. On the day after Christ said to His disciples, 'I have called you friends,' He died. But that could not terminate the sweet and holy relationship. For a brief space His death interrupted it, but He rose again to renew and perfect it. Probably all pure love is in its very nature enduring. 'Amavimus, amamus, amabimus.'[1] Tennyson was bereaved of his friend Hallam, and for a time the perplexity of his mind equalled the grief of his heart. But he could not finally doubt his intuitions of immortality. 'Peace!' he cried, 'let it be! for I loved him, and love him for ever; the dead are not dead, but alive.' Christ's victory over death confirms that instinctive conviction. In spite of many waters and floods, Divine love is unquenchable. The friends of Christ share all the power of His resurrection-life. He will not let them be resolved into a handful of dust and cease to be. His covenant of friendship cannot be broken.

3. After having initiated His disciples into this new relationship, Christ was confident that He could send them into all the earth to found His Church, to establish His Kingdom. Without it the task would have been impossible, but with it the issue could not for a moment be doubtful. The Church of Christ is just the communion of His saints, the fellowship of His friends. It cannot rest on a foundation of abstract dogma, however strong; it cannot win

[1] Words on Kingsley's tomb in Eversley Churchyard.

the world by an artistic ritual, however impressive. The secret of its strength and permanence is a human friendship which is the invariable concomitant of a Divine friendship.

¶ The minister of a seaport town in the east of Scotland was struck by the appearance at his week-night meeting of a stranger with the air of a foreigner, who seemed to be thoroughly entering into the spirit of the whole service. At the close, when the others had gone, the stranger waited to exchange greetings with the minister, who found to his astonishment that he did not know a single word of English. He was a Norseman who had stepped ashore for a day, and had somehow been led into that gathering of Christian folk. For a time the two men could only converse in dumb signs, till at length the stranger uttered two words which are the same in his Norse language as in our own English. The words were—'Jesus Christ.' There the two men were, with their different languages, their different nationalities, their different Churches—everything apparently different. Yet there was no difference, because they had one faith.

Christ is the Centre of the new humanity, which with all its diversities is one family. On a twofold friendship—that of Christ to His disciples, and that of His disciples to one another—the Catholic Church of God is broadly and deeply based. Christ was justified in His expectation. He sent His servants, whom He glorified as His friends, that they should bring forth fruit, and that their fruit should remain. They multiplied the friendship a thousandfold. They proved throughout the great world that Jew and Gentile, barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, are all unified in Christ Jesus.

4. Our Lord in this passage puts His finger upon what is lacking in the service of many of His followers. They are absolutely conscientious; they have a strong, unflinching sense of duty; they would no more neglect their obligations to God than their responsibilities to their own flesh and blood. They live ever in the Taskmaster's sight. Still they have the unpleasant feeling that they have not discovered the secret which makes the yoke easy and the burden light. They confess to themselves, if not to others, that they find the service of God somewhat irksome. They scarcely realize the meaning of the words, 'To do thy will, O Lord, I take delight.' But Christ has something more to give them. Christianity is not merely a Divine Service; it is a Divine Service transfigured by a Divine Friendship. Nothing but the alchemy of love ever transmutes a leaden service into a golden.

¶ Whitefield was once asked, 'Do you never tire of your work for God?' He answered, 'Sometimes I tire in it, but never of it.'

¶ I recollect Professor Jebb telling me once of two famous Americans, giants both in the world of literature, whom he had met, the one after the other, in companies that gathered to do them honour. The talk of both was brilliant, witty, arrestive, and memorable. But the one seemed to know it; it was expected of him; he flashed and coruscated to order. Whereas the other's speech, with its humour and its wisdom, was altogether unforced. There was not a vestige of effort.[1]

Christ's service is perfect liberty. No one can grow weary in well-doing who lives in the light of a friendship which changes all duties into delights. When Christ says, 'Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you,' the condition is added not to chill and daunt, but to encourage and inspire. Epictetus said, 'I am free and the friend of God, because I obey Him willingly.' We misunderstand our Lawgiver, the Lord of the Christian conscience, if ever we think Him a stern Master. Those words which Wordsworth addressed to abstract Duty are surely most applicable to Him:

> Thou dost wear
> The Godhead's most benignant grace;
> Nor know we anything so fair
> As is the smile upon thy face;

Arnold's lines in his *Rugby Chapel*, 'Servants of God!—or sons,' have caught the secret, which would be expressed with equal truth in this form:

> Servants of Christ!—or friends
> Shall I not call you?
> Since not as servants ye knew
> Your Master's innermost mind.

This perfect friendship is the realization of one of Plato's noblest dreams.[2] 'What if man

[1] A. Smellie, *Out of the Desert a Gift*, 193.
[2] *Symposium*, Jowett's trans., 211–212.

had eyes to see the true beauty—the Divine beauty, I mean, pure and clear and unalloyed? . . . Do you not see that in that communion only . . . he will be enabled to bring forth not images of beauty, but realities . . . and bringing forth and nourishing virtue, to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may?'

Chosen of Christ

John xv. 16.—'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.'

1. A RIGHT acceptance of this great truth, 'I have chosen you,' means strength and comfort and peace. Our salvation depends on something more stable than ourselves. The words which Christ spoke in the Upper Room to His disciples are meant for their heartening, part of the consolation He gives them for His absence. He is to leave them and they are to be sent out to an unbelieving and a hostile world, and it is for comfort that they should know that they are not picked out haphazardly but chosen by Himself for a great purpose.

Of course there is a sense in which they chose Him, but religious experience unreservedly acknowledges the profounder truth which lies in this statement: 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' There is a calling of God to which the soul of man responds. The religious man feels and knows that it is all of God, beginning in His eternal choice, and kept right through by His power. St Paul expresses it continually, as to the Ephesians: 'God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. . . . In love he foreordained us into adoption as sons.'

As a matter of fact, this is in line with what we know to be true in other directions. This element of necessity is in our lives. We were born into a country and environment and family which, with all that means in present influence and the transmission of past history, really settles many things for us. It settles a great deal of what we are and what we can do. Whatever be the place and power of personal choice, we are conditioned and limited by much over which we have no influence. Theoretically we have an unlimited power of choice as to the kind of work we will do in the world and the kind of friendships we will form, but practically much is out of our reach. It is true that in the deepest sense we need never be the victims of our fate, but may be its masters. It is true that in the deepest sense the thing that matters in our work is the spirit in which we do it, the quality of the workman and not the kind of work he does. And in our friendships what really matters is the kind of friend we are and the kind of relation it is made, not the particular persons or the particular grade of society they belong to. Still the great broad element of necessity remains a fact in both of these very important spheres. In the great things of life we seem often to be passive recipients rather than active agents. Emerson said: 'My friends have come to me unsought; the great God gave them to me.'

It seems even to go deeper than in the matter of opportunity afforded, deep into the fundamental facts of personality to which we give names like that of heredity and temperament and predisposition. Hazlitt in the *Plain Speaker* has an essay on Personal Character which he prefaces with a sentence from Montaigne: 'Men palliate and conceal their original qualities, but do not extirpate them.' The thesis of the essay is that no man really changes his character. The tree may be warped or bent, or its growth encouraged, but the grain is the same. It seems to leave us in as hopeless a fix as the old-world doctrine of planetary influence and our fate as lying in our stars. But it really means, what we see to be a fact, that temperamental characteristics remain. It does not mean that they cannot be altered or in any way changed, but that they persist through all change. The melancholy type does not become the mercurial. The man of sanguine temper is never as the phlegmatic, and never can quite be. Natural aptitudes remain. Progress means that it should be progress along that fixed line, that man should become the best of his kind. Peter, it is true, could never be like John, and James could never be a Nathanael, and Thomas who doubted could never be Judas who betrayed. But Peter, from being unstable and boastful, became the resolute champion of the Cross, ready to dare all and sacrifice all for the Lord, and Judas need not have succumbed to his covetousness and sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver. Though personal character may be fixed, as Hazlitt maintained, we can strengthen infirmities and be cured of the defects of our qualities.

In fact the doctrine which underlies our Lord's words is really the doctrine of grace, and the consciousness of this is a matter of experience. Every disciple of Christ knew kimself to be chosen and called; and we know it still. The beginning of everything is God's love and grace. If we love Him it is because He first loved us. 'Herein is love,' said St John, 'not that we loved God, but that he loved us.' It is not that we choose, but that we are chosen. Christian faith is simply the acceptance of Christ's love, a love which is there, not dependent on our love or anything in us.

> It was not that I cared for Thee;
> But Thou didst set Thy love upon
> Me, even me Thy little one.

One thing the disciples had in common—obedience to a clear call. The love of Christ reached and touched their wills—it 'constrained' them as it constrained St Paul; they left all and followed where it called them. Their characters exhibit no frigid consistency; but they were capable of receiving a deep and permanent impression which shaped their lives from that day forward. They acted at once on their new conviction, and never looked back. It was not they who chose Christ, but Christ who chose them.

2. Also, Christ's choice is for service, not to privilege but to duty. From one aspect it is the selection of an instrument. Of course it is more than that, because a man is not like a dead tool that may be honoured by being used for a high purpose. He is conscious of his destiny and makes himself the willing agent of love. There is privilege in it. Who can be blind to the privilege and blessing of the Twelve with their days and nights spent in the company of Jesus, touching His hand and looking into His eyes and hearing His words and communing with His soul? And there is privilege in every high choice. But the sense of privilege and personal blessing are by the way, something that comes along with the chief end. The joy is a sort of by-product, always produced, but not for its own sake. We are chosen to fruitfulness, to being and doing, not to enjoying. The enjoying is not missed, but it comes as a result of the larger end.

Christ calls us to be His fellow-workers. He has not kept the saving of the world in His own hands. Our Lord has been graciously pleased to throw Himself on our loyalty and allow us to have a real share in it. There is work for all of us to do—work for each of us, which will remain undone if we do not do it—work of very various kinds, adapted to our several capacities.

¶ My father, when I was a boy, used to spend his leisure in editing books, and I remember once, just when I was leaving school, he was editing one of the cantos of *Childe Harold*. He had the introduction all shaped out and most of his notes were blocked, and he turned to me and said: 'I am very busy, I want you to complete the editing of this book for me.' You know, to this hour, I have never forgotten it. To this hour I remember the joy and pride I felt when I was called to be a fellow-worker with my father.[1]

Christians are not called to be saved primarily, but called to be saints. They are not called to a crown of life, but called to be faithful unto death and then to obtain a crown of life. Disciples are chosen that they should go and bring forth fruit. There is no selfishness in religion. And we may know with accuracy the value that we set on Christ by the eagerness with which we are endeavouring to share Him with others. Once we are Christ's, we have entered a kingdom, have become members of a state, and we should feel the thrill of that, which ought to act upon us much as patriotism does. Henceforth this kingdom's interests are our interests; what touches it touches our hearts, and we must be ready at need to work for it, live for it, die for it.

¶ Joubert, with his delicate French mind, points out that the word 'liberty' has greatly changed its meaning with the years, that whereas now to be free means to be independent, in ancient times to be free meant to have a real share in the governing and carrying on of the state. And in the Testament the Christian freeman is not merely one who has received a signal benefit, though that is everywhere underlined, but—and this too is emphasized as heavily—one who has shouldered grave and staggering responsibilities.[2]

If Christ chooses men does it seem useless to speak about men choosing Christ? By no means. There is a sense in which the disciples

[1] G. H. Morrison, *Morning Sermons*, 16.
[2] A. J. Gossip, *From the Edge of the Crowd*, 104.

chose Christ. We are chosen for the same reason for which we would choose. To try to separate the two processes is to make a futile distinction, like too fine distinctions between choosing a friend and being chosen by him. There is a calling of God to which the soul of man responds, but religion means that the human soul *does* respond. Faith means the acceptance of a love which is offered us. It does not create the love, but it recognizes it and receives it. If we are sure that Christ has chosen us, it is because we have begun to respond to His love. We love Him who first loved us. His we are, and Him we serve.

If Christ had not Come!

John xv. 22, 24.—'If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin.' 'If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin.'

If we place ourselves in imagination at any great epoch of history—the Reformation, the Invention of Printing, the Discovery of America, the Norman Invasion, the Downfall of the Roman Empire, the Destruction of Jerusalem—we realize at once the impossibility of conceiving what the history of the world would have been, had those momentous events not taken place. But our sense of bewilderment and our consciousness of speculative impotency will be increased immeasurably, if we try to imagine what course the history of the race would have taken, had the most stupendous event that ever happened not occurred, namely, the Advent of Jesus Christ. One's mind cannot get under way at all with such a problem. For He has been the supreme factor in the history of the Christian era. We date the passage of the years by the year of His birth, dividing time into 'before' and 'after' at that point. And we owe everything that is elevating in our civilization, and fraught with the promise of future well-being, directly or indirectly to Him.

But, while we are utterly unable to represent to ourselves the course which the history of the world would have followed had Christ not come, these verses emphasize the moral and spiritual significance of His Advent for us as individuals. 'If I had not come and spoken unto them, . . . if I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin.'

1. *The Responsibility created by the Fact of Christ's Presence in the World.*—When our Lord entered on His public ministry, He at once drew to Himself the attention of high and low. He invited men to take up a definite attitude towards Himself. People instinctively and inevitably ranged themselves on the side that was for Him, or on the side that was against Him. They could not help passing a verdict on One who advanced the claims that He did, and who repealed and supplemented their traditional law with an authority that no scribe ever assumed. Every person who came in contact with Him was tested by Him, and a feeling of attraction or repulsion was awakened in their hearts. In this cleavage of the populace into opposite parties there was fulfilled the prophecy of Simeon: 'This child is set for the falling and rising up of many in Israel.'

Every great boon conferred on mankind, whether it takes the form of the appearance in their midst of a commanding personality or the acquisition of a new political or social privilege, assumes the character of an opportunity. Advantage may be taken of the opportunity: or it may be neglected and abused. No benefit can come otherwise than in the form of an opportunity, fraught with blessing to those who embrace it, but fraught with the opposite to those who despise it. If it had not been put within their reach, the former would not have attained to the higher and richer experience which it secured to them, while the latter would not have incurred the guilt of rejecting it, and confirmed themselves in a condition of insensibility to all such appeals.

¶ When a man told Sir Stafford Northcote, one of his opponents, of Lord John Russell's death, he added, 'Poor Lord John.' To which the other answered, 'Why poor? He was given a great chance and he took it.'

God's unspeakable Gift to the race comes under this universal law. The presence of Jesus Christ in the world constitutes a supreme opportunity. With it we must deal. With Him we must deal either in the way of acceptance and obedience, or the reverse. It is not within our power to divest ourselves of this grave responsibility. He has come, and spoken unto men words which none other spoke, and done works which none other did. As the eyes of a portrait painted by a master follow us all round the gallery in which it is hung, so do

the eyes of Christ arrest us and challenge us. Whither can we go from His Spirit, and whither can we flee from His presence? It is not a theory of His Person that He requires us to give. We might well declare our insufficiency for such a task. He demands from us a reply to the question as to what we are making of our life, and as to the place we are giving to Him in our hearts. No answer to the inquiry, 'What think ye of Christ?' can possibly be worthy unless it is provided by personal experience of faith in Him and obedience to Him. 'If He had not come!'—but He has come, and He presents to us a great and solemn opportunity.

2. *The Consciousness of Sin bespeaks the Presence of Christ in a Man's Life.*—The presence of Christ when He was on this earth had the effect of revealing to men and women their sinfulness. The sight of Him on one occasion made Simon Peter exclaim, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' The spectacle of Christ entering his door caused Zacchæus to take a swift survey of his past life, and announce great reparations. The challenge of Christ awoke the slumbering consciences of certain scribes and Pharisees who had brought to Him one that had been taken in sin. 'They went out,' we read, 'one by one, beginning from the eldest even unto the last.'

And so when there rises up before us the dark vision of what we have been and are, when shame spreads its mantle over our feelings and we are filled with self-reproach and self-disgust, let us seek to believe that these experiences are ours because Christ is near at hand. 'If once sensibility to sin be lost,' says Marcus Aurelius, 'what object is there in still living on?' It is 'the beginning of man's doom.' But sensibility to sin is hard to arouse. How common a circumstance it is for good advice, tendered with the best intentions, to have the effect only of offending a brother's pride, and establishing him in a sullen attachment to his habitual ways. Some disturbance of the complacency, into which a man's moral interest is always liable to settle down, may be brought about by the faithful rebukes of a friend, or the silent influence of a life of self-sacrifice. But to awaken that deep dissatisfaction which characterizes genuine repentance towards God, He must come into our life who is able to effect a work of conviction, for which none other is sufficient.

¶ Still, when Christ meets us, our consciences begin to speak. What was only a faint suspicion, an unpleasant possibility, suddenly becomes a great unyielding reality. There was something that nettled us when the things of God came too near—a distaste, a discomfort, an alarm. There was something in us that tried to get its lips opened and answer. When we heard men plead for Him, something spoke with them and said, 'That is true.' But neither of these feelings was enough, till one day Jesus came, and stood up behind each of our sins, and said of every one of them: 'That was aimed at *Me*'; 'That was stolen from *Me*'; 'My compassion bore that, and My patience, and My love.' To say that, is to salute Christ with the conscience. And nothing can compel the salutation except the personal presence of Christ.[1]

3. *Jesus Christ manifests Himself not to Condemn, but to Save.*—'God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world: but that the world through him might be saved.' Those words of the Evangelist are true in their widest application, and they are true when their application is narrowed down to our own experience. He, but for whose presence in our hearts we had not had the consciousness of sin, comes into the little world of our life not to condemn us, but to save us. The service which He is able to render to us is not the disappointing and melancholy one of a physician whose skill enables him to diagnose our condition, but who is forced to confess that he can do nothing to cure us. He 'shows us all the sin,' in order that He may 'teach us all the mercy.' And 'the mercy' which He 'teaches' includes forgiveness and something else. That something else is the gift of His Spirit. We are not left to struggle upwards, as best we can, towards moral well-being from the zero represented by the level at which we have experienced forgiveness. The revelation to us by Christ of what we are not, qualifies us to receive and appreciate forgiveness. It also, it always, sets before us what we can become 'through him that strengtheneth us.'

[1] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 35.

The Life of Testimony

John xv. 26, 27.—'He shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness.'

These words describe the twofold attitude of reception and reflection which must in all ages characterize the lives of those who are truly Christ's. They are to be continually themselves receiving the teaching of the Holy Spirit concerning Christ, and are to be as constantly proclaiming Him to those amongst whom they are set as His witnesses. Their inner life and outward activity are thus to harmonize and to keep pace. Their preparation both of heart and message is to be the work of the Divine Spirit. But the responsibility both of attention and obedience is their own! Such are some of the precepts comprehended in this statement of Christ, to which we do well to take good heed. For in these days, no less than in those immediately following His own, the great need of His people is that of witnessing power. The world is as hostile towards Christ as ever it was, though its hostility may now assume more cultured and refined forms than of old. On this account the need of clear and undaunted testimony to the reality of His grace and power cannot be exaggerated. And indeed the only weapon with which He has armed us for the world's conquest is that of witnessing.

1. *He shall testify of me.*—The true test of a man's inner life is as to whether he is daily receiving the teaching of the Holy Spirit concerning Jesus. For this is the pre-eminent work of Him who speaks not of Himself, but is ever unveiling to the attentive soul the all-sufficiency of the Saviour. His atonement and all that that mysterious transaction holds, His advocacy and all that His Presence at the throne means, His advent and all that His glorious appearing promises—these are the themes upon which the Holy Spirit bases His testimony, not in an academic but in a transforming ministry of grace. For His objective is not mere enlightenment of mind but transfiguration of character. To behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, and to be changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord, is the Divine preparation of a man for life-service as a witness. In the nature of the case such heart-revelation of Christ is progressive, answering to the new needs in which the constantly changing circumstances of life involve us. For we learn of Him not merely in directed study of the written Word, but by application of the truth to present necessities of heart and life. Indeed, it is not too much to say that our circumstances are all ordered and varied with a view to our gaining completer knowledge of our infinite resources in the Lord Christ, and with still further view to our efficiency as His witnesses. Heart-attention to the Spirit's insistent testimony of Christ is the open secret of strength.

¶ The witness of General Gordon to the Saviour was always unwavering in its faithfulness, and is still a quickening and stimulating memory to lesser men. The secret of the power and effectiveness with which his life stated the case for Christ before the world was his fidelity in waiting for the daily teaching of the Spirit concerning Him. No words of all those that have been penned concerning him so clearly indicate the real man as those which tell that—

> This man was not great
> By gold or kingly state,
> Or the bright sword, or knowledge of earth's wonder:
> But more than all his race
> He saw life face to face,
> And heard the still small voice above the thunder.

2. *And ye also shall bear witness*—though not by outward constraint so much as by inward impulse. For the one who is thus continually 'finding out the greatness of his loving heart' cannot but tell of that which has become his own chief good. The ministry of bearing witness is unavoidable to those to whom Christ has become a redeeming reality! Now a witness is primarily one who testifies upon the authority of experience. Philosophy, book knowledge, and the like may all have their place in any well-ordered life, but their possession confers no power for witnessing. For this service the one qualification is personal knowledge gained by experience, such experience as into which the Holy Spirit daily brings the willing soul. And the testimony of a changed life, the witness of a transformed temper, the proof afforded by renewed desire and recovered power, is incontrovertible. 'Seeing the man that was healed, they could say nothing against it!'

¶ Dr Gossip tells the following story. 'I remember my friend John Hutton, of the

British Weekly, was preaching in Yorkshire, and in the middle of his address a man got up and said, "Let us sing 'Praise God from Whom all blessings flow,'" and my friend sank down like a punctured tyre. Afterwards the man came and apologized and said, "I have only been converted three weeks, I just could not help it, it is all so exciting." Then he went on to describe to Dr Hutton his new life in glowing terms. He said, "There is only one other man and myself in our squad who make any profession, and the other fellows give us a time of it, but it is good for us." "What do they do?" "Oh, they ask us questions." "What kind of questions?" "Yesterday a man said, 'You don't believe that silly old story about Jesus Christ turning water into wine?'" "What did you say?" said Hutton, and the man replied, "I said I did not know anything about whether Christ turned water into wine, but I know that in my house He has turned beer into furniture, and that is a good enough miracle for me."'

But the outflow cannot be greater than the intake, a fact which many earnest souls are in danger of forgetting. Activity of service and witness is liable to outstrip experience by the impulse of its own necessity and the momentum of its own claims, and nothing is more important than to guard against running dry. The witnessing disciple must see to it that nothing interferes with the supply of the living water to his own heart, for only such a constant fresh experience of Christ as the Holy Spirit can give is sufficient for a convincing testimony to the world.

¶ There is good teaching in this passage from one of Madame Guyon's letters: 'Let your own soul be first filled with God's Spirit, and then and not otherwise will you be in a situation to communicate the Divine fullness to others. No man can give what he has not; or if a man has grace, but has it in a small degree, he may in dispensing to others impart to them what is necessary for himself.'

Not only is it true in every life that the outflow is regulated by the inflow, but the converse is equally true also. The inflow is largely dependent upon the outflow. If a man is unfaithful in bearing his witness his own inner experience is affected. The Holy Spirit's gracious testimony to the things of Christ is arrested where His purpose is thwarted by disobedience, or fear, or selfishness. There is a power of reaction in spiritual as in natural forces which is nowhere seen more clearly than in this connection. If a man ceases to bear his witness to what he knows of Christ, further knowledge is rendered impossible. The Holy Spirit in all His ministries of teaching and grace is given only to 'them that obey him'! There is a machine used in the manufacture of linen which is of such delicate construction and adjustment that if, in the course of the process for which it is employed, a single thread breaks, the whole machine automatically stops, thus giving warning to the operator of the mishap. Nor can it be restarted until the broken strand is repaired. And this triumph of engineering skill is but a mechanical illustration of the spiritual principle which underlies all the work of the Holy Spirit in and through us. The slightest wilful deviation from His plan involves us in a cessation of His blessing, which is not renewed except as the sin is removed. If, therefore, we would assure to ourselves the continuance of the presence and power of the Comforter, we must not fail in our witness to the world.

And if such considerations taken together form a powerful inner constraint, what can be said as to the outer call which the need of the world constitutes? On every hand is abundant evidence that what the world really needs is Christ. He alone is the answer to all the vain questionings of men, the satisfaction of their unspoken needs, the Saviour who can raise and restore them. His Name alone is given whereby men must be saved, and the possession of this priceless knowledge involves us in the moral responsibility of generous communication—even to the ends of the earth. Do not let us excuse ourselves either on account of the difficulty of the work or of our personal insufficiency. Rather let us face the world with the testimony of Christ on lips made eloquent by reason of hearts set on fire by His love; and in the strength of the constantly renewed ministry of the Comforter to our own hearts declare with Peter that 'we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Ghost.'

Send us this day amongst our fellows,
Held every moment in Thine own strong friendship,
To be for Thee, triumphantly,
The heralds of Thy Will, Thy Word,
Thy generous Love, Thy Hope, Thy Joy,
Thy Might, Thy Purity, Thy Beauty.

The Ascension Teaching

John xvi. 7.—'It is expedient for you that I go away.'

When our Lord spoke of His Ascension it was not as a pathetic farewell to the world, nor was it as a triumphant return to heaven as the disciples came to think of it later in the light of its power and its consequences; it was as the natural end of the work which began at the Incarnation. 'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father.' The earthly ministry had done its work and reached its proper term. It was now expedient that He should go away. Another chapter in God's dealings with men was about to begin.

Why was it expedient? Why could He not have remained with us, seen occasionally, as He was by His disciples during the forty days? Then we might have hoped to meet Him in the lonely walk, or in the silence of our chamber while we knelt in prayer, or at His own Holy Table. What would it be to us to have ocular demonstration that He is still alive, to hear from His own lips our doubts resolved, our duties made clear, and when we have fallen to hear His own assurance that we are forgiven? So we wonder and dream. And yet His words are clear: 'It is expedient for you that I go away.'

Not less mysterious is the reason which He gives. 'If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.' Why cannot the Holy Ghost come unless Christ goes? And is it so obvious that the unseen Comforter is better than the visible presence? So one mystery is answered by another. God gives us a staff to help us to walk, and then takes it away as soon as we have begun to lean upon it. We say on Mount Tabor: 'Lord, it is good for us to be here,' and straightway the vision fades into thin air, and we are brought to Gethsemane instead. Doubtless it is all for our good. He takes away our crutches and gives us wings. But the crutches had become familiar, and we do not easily learn to fly.

1. If the conditions of the forty days had been continued, we should have learned to associate Christ with particular times and places. If we had been able to appeal to Him and fly to Him in our difficulties it would not really have been good for us. A masterful personality always at hand does not educate, but dominates; it subdues and crushes spontaneous life and growth. It is only, it has been said, so far as we cannot help ourselves that help is a real kindness. All beyond that only weakens us and checks our growth. And this our own experience teaches us; the pupil finds strength comes to him when his master has left him to face the problem by himself; the son feels a new development of strength now that he is at school away from home; the clerk reveals unexpected talent because the manager, who has left everything in his hands, has gone away on a holiday. So the disciples become quite different men after the Lord has ascended into heaven where He could no longer be seen.

The desire for a visible Christ is also the sign of imperfect faith. When on earth our Lord lived as a man among men. He set before His friends an example of a life lived in perfect dependence on a spiritual environment, drawing its strength and sustenance from the Unseen. They watched Him, awed and thrilled, and content to be by His side. But what He wanted was that they should enter that Kingdom for themselves and be at home there. So long as He was there, a visible witness of the reality of the heavenly kingdom, their faith could not have its full exercise. To Thomas, convinced by visible evidence, He spoke of the greater blessedness of those who 'have not seen and yet have believed.' And in Mary Magdalene we see the same imperfect faith when, forgetting her Lord's promises, she went very early to seek the dead among the dead. And so, when she found Him not, her last flame of hope was extinguished, and because her face was turned towards the empty grave and her mind set on what it seemed to signify, she did not recognize the beloved voice when it spoke to her. She 'supposed him to be the gardener.' So we often turn from the light of the living presence to the mists of the buried past. We cannot recognize Him in any unexpected quarter until He speaks to the core of our heart, and calls us by our name as no one else can call us.

¶ Yet if Christ had remained: if He were even now with us in our daily lives as He was in the daily lives of His Apostles: if there were, therefore, always within our reach, for the asking, an infallible answer to every doubt and every difficulty, should we really profit by it?

Would not His very proximity to us be a barrier between us, because the temptation would be rather to rest content with seeing Him than to rouse ourselves to know and understand Him—and 'this is eternal life, that they should *know* thee . . . and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent'? He would indeed be a faultless model: we should find in Him, in perfection, all that should be the objects of our endeavour: but He would for ever be *someone else*, someone *outside* of us, a separate individuality of whom, with Him there before us, how could we ever say as St Paul would have us say, 'I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me'? For to live the Christ-life means that there is to be not a mere imitation but an identical reproduction in terms of our own individuality of His life and spirit in our own.[1]

2. So the teaching of the Ascension is that we must not cling to the knowledge of Christ after the flesh. Christ has passed into the unseen world which is very near to us, around us, and among us. His presence is of a different kind from what it was; but it is not less real and not less near. We come close to Him whenever we are lifted up in heart and mind to the region where He dwells, the sphere where all that is good and beautiful and true has its home. This is the heavenly region from which Christ came down, a region separated from earth not by tracts of space, but by a difference of nature. There is no up and down, there is no near and far in the spiritual world. If we have the mind of Christ, He is with us all, with each of us always.

O strangely art thou with us, Lord.
Neither in height nor depth to seek;
In nearness shall Thy voice be heard,
Spirit to spirit Thou dost speak.[2]

'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above.' Whenever we are drawn upward by anything noble or beautiful or true we hear His voice, though maybe we do not recognize it, 'supposing him to be the gardener,' connecting the words with other things and other persons.

[1] R. H. J. Steuart, *Temples of Eternity*, 1. [2] A. H. Vine.

In what other way could we know our Lord? Had He remained with us in bodily presence how could we have thought of Him as dwelling in us, and we in Him? How could we have thought of Him as our Mediator at the right hand of God? He has denied us the touch of that hand of healing and of blessing, that we might raise our minds to those hands that bear up the world, that we might know that they are spread above us with their load of mercy on our hearts, to soften, to heal, and to strengthen.

Christ our Lord and God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Ever since that first Ascension Day there is only one way of getting near to Him, and that is to be like Him. For this is the law of the spiritual world. Kindred spirits are always near each other, no matter how they are separated by time and space. Spirits that have nothing in common are poles asunder, although they may live under the same roof. It is vain to seek Christ in prayer if our words mount up and our hearts remain below. It is vain to seek Him in Holy Scripture if we read with dead and dull hearts; vain even to seek Him in the Holy Communion if our affections are not set on things above. Therefore may He who alone can give us the seeing eye and the hearing ear shine in our hearts and give us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. So we shall thank Him for giving us faith here and not sight. For the eye of faith is far keener than mortal sight. So we shall understand that it was expedient for us that He should go away, that He should go away to prepare our spirits to be where He is—with the Father of spirits, where spirits have their true eternal home.

Thou hast raised our human nature
On the clouds to God's right hand
There we sit in heavenly places,
There with Thee in glory stand.

Jesus reigns, adored by Angels;
Man with God is on the Throne;
Mighty Lord, in Thine Ascension,
We by faith behold our own.[1]

[1] Christopher Wordsworth.

THE THREEFOLD WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

John xvi. 8.—'And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.'

Our Lord has announced to His disciples that He is about to return to the Father, leaving them behind to face the world and the world's sin. He has set them a seemingly impossible task, to win the world for God. The forces arrayed against them are powerful and impregnably entrenched; the immediate prospect is of cruel and bitter persecution. They might well despair, feeling truly that of themselves they could do nothing. But for their heartening a promise is given of the coming of a divine ally, the heavenly Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, who by His secret influence will bring conviction to the hearts of men. The word 'reprove' does not adequately convey the force of the original, which means to convict and convince. The promise is that the Spirit will work powerfully in the hearts of men to create an irresistible conviction of the truth of the gospel and lead to confession and faith.

This is the heavenly aid upon which every preacher and teacher of the gospel must rely. Here is our only ground of hope. For without the Spirit all our expositions, arguments, and appeals are vain. Men will determinedly remain blind to the truth, will evade the most convincing arguments, and resist the most moving appeals. Sooner or later every preacher learns that by bitter experience, and comes to know that it is 'the Spirit of God,' as the Shorter Catechism says, that 'maketh the preaching of the Word an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.'

This convincing witness of the Spirit our Lord declares to be threefold.

I

Conviction of Sin

In the first place He shall convince the world of sin. A difficult task, a humanly impossible task, to convince this old world that it is profoundly in the wrong and needs to be regenerated!

The world has little or no sense of sin, and the last thing the natural man is willing to confess is that he personally is a sinner. It was so in that ancient world to which the Apostles were sent. 'In the many disquisitions which Epictetus and others have left us concerning the proper frame of mind in which man should approach death, repentance for past sin has absolutely no place, nor do the ancients appear to have ever realized the purifying and spiritualizing influence it exercises upon character.'[1] The Roman Emperor Julian on his death-bed calmly declared, 'I die without remorse, as I have lived without guilt.'[2] In the Far East the Chinese sage Confucius despaired of the world of his time, because, said he, 'I have not yet seen one who could perceive his fault and inwardly accuse himself.' It need not therefore be counted a strange thing if in the world of to-day the sense of sin is greatly weakened and all but lost, as it would appear to be. Modern man explains away his sin as good in the making, or at the worst some relic of the brute. Surely it must be accounted about wellnigh the meanest subterfuge that man has ever taken refuge in, when, after fabricating a theory of his kinship with the lower creatures, he straightway imputes to them the whole guilt of his sin, and represents himself as a noble soul struggling to be free from the base entanglement of his poor relations! Could the dumb creatures speak in their own defence they might well say, 'What is our sin? Do we run to excess in our eating and drinking as man does? Do we violate Nature and bring foul diseases upon ourselves? Are we wantonly cruel? We kill to satisfy our hunger, but we do not go to war as man does, we do not enslave and torture our kind as man does.' There is in reality nothing in the actings of the lower creatures to correspond to sin in man, and all this talk about the relics of the brute simply shows a total failure to understand what sin is. Sin, in its essence, is not physical but spiritual. It does not consist in bad actions merely, though it may express itself in these; it is something far deeper and more inward, an evil bent of the mind, a corruption of the inner

[1] Lecky, *European Morals*, i. 195.
[2] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, ch. xxiv.

man, which calls for a thorough change of disposition, a profound renewing in thoughts and affections and will.

Only the Spirit of God can work this change, and He does so by revealing Christ and showing what the world's rejection of the Saviour means. He shall convict the world of sin 'because they believe not on me,' our Lord says. That may seem a somewhat narrow ground on which to base the conviction of sin. Especially to-day many are inclined so to regard it. The scientific spirit has spread, and there are formidable difficulties in the way of belief. We cannot be expected to commit ourselves, we do best to suspend judgment about Christ and His claims. It is assumed that the difficulty is intellectual only, but it is something far different that is in question here. Think what the rejection of Jesus by the Jews meant. Was it an intellectual inability to believe? No, at the root of it there lay a hatred of divine goodness, a rejection of divine love. There the true nature of sin stands forever revealed. Sin often wears a pleasant face, and over the social life of man there is spread a thin veneer of decency which hides the ugliness within. Yet at times there come revealing moments, outbreaks and upheavals in the life of the individual or the community which suddenly show, as by hell's own light, what human nature is. Such a revealing moment was Calvary. That stark cross upon a hill has shown to all ages in one lurid flash the sin of the world.

Whatever particular form sin may take it is bred of that same spirit which crucified the Lord of glory, and when Christ is presented to us, if we reject Him it means that we have taken sides with the world that cast Him out. By this will men be convicted, not because they have committed this or that wicked deed, but because they have rejected the very spirit of goodness. 'This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.' Moreover, when we remember, as our Christian faith declares, that Christ is 'the light that lighteth every man,' we realize how the Spirit may bring home conviction even to those who have never heard of Christ as come in the flesh. The sin against light is the sin of sins, and who shall dare to say that he is clear of that? When Mansoul revolted from its allegiance to Emmanuel, as Bunyan tells us, they shut up Mr Conscience in his house, barred his door and blinded his windows and cut the rope of the great bell he was wont to ring. But sometimes, in spite of them, Mr Conscience would escape and ring the bell. Who is there among us who at some time or another, when the gospel was preached, has not heard in the secret of his heart the solemn tones of that great alarm bell, and known himself a sinner?

II

Conviction of Righteousness

Second, the Spirit shall convince the world of righteousness. He shall reveal heights above equal to the depths below, both transcending man's natural imagination. The world has no adequate sense of sin, neither has it an adequate sense of righteousness. There are certain standards of righteousness common among men, but they are very variable, and the best of them is most imperfect. The standard in one age and country differs widely from that in another, but in every case the standard is fixed just about the level of the average man's doings. This is a most comfortable arrangement, which leaves most men free to follow the path of their own inclinations without any disturbing thought of better things. Keeping with ease to the average level and counting themselves as good as their neighbours, they have a comforting assurance that nothing more can reasonably be expected of them. Ideals, doubtless, there are, and glimpses come of higher things, but they are looked upon as visionary. Beautiful dreams, making up the fine stuff of poetry, but of course not to be thought of as able to be embodied in everyday life.

But the Spirit brings Christ to view and bids us lift up our eyes to the exalted Son of Man. 'He shall convince the world of righteousness, because I go to the Father.' What is the meaning of this? What is the implied connection between the exaltation of Christ and the conviction of righteousness? It is obvious. For in Him righteousness was incarnate, a new, diviner righteousness than the world had ever known. And the world rejected it, even as the world still rejects it, finding one excuse or another for not taking His teaching seriously, counting it altogether too visionary and impos-

sible for everyday use. But the Spirit shows to the world the exalted Son of Man, pressing upon men the conviction that He who was rejected is now glorified, that the righteousness which was incarnate in Him is now crowned. In other words, that His way of life is God's way, and that to live as He lived is the true pathway of glory.

Thus the Spirit sets up a new and heavenly standard of righteousness, a standard which, while it is altogether divine, is yet a standard set for men since it was truly embodied in flesh and blood in Jesus Christ. Brought face to face with Him men can no longer complacently go on 'comparing themselves with themselves and measuring themselves by themselves,' as St Paul says, but must examine themselves in the pure light that comes from Him. Looking out from my study window at the Lomond Hills of Fife I have often watched happy companies of climbers dotting the green hillside with their white and coloured dresses, but the moment they reached the top and stood upon the skyline they were all black alike. So long as the earth was the background differences of shade and pretty colours were apparent, but against the background of the sky these distinctions vanished and all were thrown into the shade. So is it in the moral world when we take for our standard of righteousness not the imperfect people round us but the exalted and glorified Son of Man. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the writer points to Jesus, 'crowned with glory and honour,' as the pledge of man's promised dominion. So here the Spirit teaches us to find in the exalted Christ our moral ideal, the embodiment of a righteousness which, while it is truly human inasmuch as it was wrought out under the conditions of an earthly life, shines with a radiance all divine. It is this which convicts us all without distinction, showing our own imperfection and at the same time compelling the confession that here is the standard to which, divine and impossible as it is, we ought to conform.

III

Conviction of Judgment

Further, the Spirit shall convince the world of judgment, 'because the prince of this world is judged.' The world is accustomed itself to sit in the seat of judgment, and not to be judged. The ancient Romans had a proverb which is almost naturalized in our tongue, 'Securus judicat orbis terrarum.' The world judges securely, its word is final, there is no appeal from its decision. So men usually think. How powerful is the authority of custom! It becomes a very tyrant whose lightest word is law. Multitudes never rise above the idea that the opinions and practices of their own time and place are the supreme rule, never to be questioned. What everybody says must be true, what everybody does must be right, and there is no gainsaying it. As the saying is, 'You can't live in Rome and strive with the Pope.' It is no light thing to call in question the judgment of the world. Not merely is one in danger of being counted odd and of being laughed out of court, but if the challenge be a serious one there is literally no length to which the world will not go to maintain its authority. Times innumerable the world has sent to the scaffold those who had the temerity to challenge the popular voice and to oppose the ways and opinions of their time.

But now, by the manifestation of Christ, 'the prince of this world is judged.' Perhaps we might express the meaning by saying that through Christ the world's principles of judgment are shown to be false and are condemned. In judging Christ the world pronounced judgment on itself, in condemning Him the world was itself condemned. We read that Noah, when he prepared an ark to the saving of his house, thereby 'condemned the world.' He declared by his action that the world was an evil world, ripe for destruction, and that he had neither part nor lot in it. Thus he stood over against the world in sharp antagonism. If the world was right then he was wrong and a fool, but if he was right then the world was wrong and on the brink of judgment. In like manner Calvary condemns the world. If, as has been said, the history of the world is the judgment of the world, then the most critical event in history brings out that judgment most acutely. When the whole course of human history is surveyed the most arresting fact is that cruel cross outside the city wall. There it stands, and over against it the jeering crowd. There is no reconciling of these two; the opposition is absolute. Their judgment is one of mutual condemnation, and when the Son of Man is exalted the world that crucified Him is condemned.

The word used here for judgment is a word which has been much of late on the lips of men, namely, *crisis*. It is a purely Greek word, brought into English without the change of a letter. Every one knows what a crisis means, a supreme test, a situation big with momentous issues and which calls for instant decision on the part of all who are involved in it. It is the work of the Spirit of God in presenting Christ to bring men into such a crisis, summoning them to judge and to act if they would not themselves be judged. Within recent years a powerful movement has sprung up on the Continent and has begun to influence profoundly the Christian world, a movement to which the name of 'the theology of crisis' has been not unfitly given. It boldly challenges the thought of the age and finds much to condemn. The popular ideas of man as a noble aspiring figure, of the world as undergoing a natural evolution towards perfection, are shown to be the flattering illusions of the natural human heart. The question is pressed home whether man can be his own saviour or whether he is a sinner needing to be saved by grace. These are two positions ultimately irreconcilable, and we must choose between them and act accordingly. The theology of crisis speaks here with no uncertain voice. It proclaims the old evangelical and apostolic doctrines of sin and righteousness and judgment, and presses home the fact that these things are not to be made the subject of cool intellectual discussion but of moral decision. They call for action and not idle speculation. It was in this spirit that the gospel was received when it was first preached in the freshness of its power at Pentecost. The hearers did not commend or criticize the preacher, but forgetting him and thinking only of the tremendous import of his message, they were pricked in their heart and said, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' It is the aim of the Spirit, working through the preaching of the Word, to bring men to the point of saying, 'What shall we do?' Here are certain momentous facts which have a decisive influence on human life and destiny, and particularly upon your life and destiny. What are you going to do about it?

It must be freely confessed that this whole work of conviction is profoundly disturbing. Its effect is like the deep movement of an earthquake which suddenly reveals that the solid ground is after all an unstable thing. Men hate to be thus disquieted. They resent it when they are suddenly held up on their road and challenged and bidden come to a decision. It seems an unwarrantable interference with a man's liberty. Let it therefore be understood that the Spirit's work of conviction is in love and with a saving intent. Surely if the things in which men trust are in reality insecure, it is well that they should be roused out of their false sense of security. If the foundations of the house are set on sand it is well that the householder should be warned before the floods come. Even so, in the infinite mercy of God, the Spirit convinces us of sin that we may be led to repentance. He convinces us of righteousness that we may despair of our own righteousness and seek the righteousness of God through faith in Christ. And finally He convinces us of judgment to bring us to decision, that we may escape the condemnation of a sinful world and find acceptance in God's great day.

J. H. Morrison

Progressive Revelation

John xvi. 12.—'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.'

1. Our Lord seems to have felt the importance of not losing or bewildering His followers by premature disclosure of His purposes. And so in His last discourse before the Passion, as recorded by John, He tells them that there is much that they have yet to learn, but at this stage in their spiritual development all this would be a burden which they could not carry. It would crush them now; they must wait for the illuminating influence of the Spirit of Truth, to guide them into all the truth. His revelation of Himself to His immediate followers, like God's revelation of Himself to the world at large, was thus to be a progressive revelation.

What were the 'many things' which our Lord had to say to His followers? We can only conjecture. One of them possibly was a fuller explanation of the meaning of His death and passion, such as was given to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus after the Resurrection. During the forty days before the Ascension He may have given other teaching to the Apostles, but nothing very definite has been preserved beyond the baptismal formula. What is certain

is that He left behind Him no injunctions which would be likely to hamper His followers in the process of building up the new Church. He saw the mischief that might result if by laying down rigid rules of Church organization He were to fetter their discretion when new situations and emergencies arose. If His Church was to extend throughout the world and last for all time, it must be left to settle for itself all purely human problems of ritual and organization, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. What he bequeathed to it was the Divine message which He had brought into the world. That was to be permanent, universal, unchangeable. But the setting and surroundings of that Divine message, its application and adaptation to the varying needs of human society, as time went on—such questions as these might safely be left to the future. The many things which He had to say were to be said, not by the Risen Lord Himself, but by the Holy Spirit who was to replace His personal presence.

When we turn to the Book of Acts we see the way in which the early problems of the Christian Church were, as a matter of fact, worked out. The Church was early confronted with the great question whether Gentiles should be admitted into the Christian community, and if so, on what terms. Were they to become Jews before they could be Christians? On the answer to these questions depended the very possibility of a universal Church, and we might have supposed that Jesus would have left behind Him some directions on this vital point. But it was not so. Had He done so, there must have been some reference in the Acts to our Lord's expressed wishes. The Apostles were left to decide the question, as we are left to decide Church difficulties now, by prayerful deliberation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The time had come when the question was ripe for solution; its solution, indeed, had become a pressing necessity. The Judaizing Christians, influential as they were, could not carry their point, and a step was taken which made Christianity the religion of the Western world instead of the religion of an obscure Jewish sect.

2. We not merely see in the Acts how the growth of circumstances fitted the Apostles by degrees for fresh revelations of the Divine will; we can also trace how in every age throughout the history of the Church of Christ new light has dawned and new ideas have presented themselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We know, of course, only too well that the progress has not been continuous—that there have been errors and relapses and interruptions, times of deadness and stagnation. Still, age after age the Church has had to face, and on the whole has more or less successfully faced, the spiritual problems of its day. Each successive generation of Christians all over the world has had to adjust itself to the changing conditions of its time, and in so far as it has tried to do this with courage, patience, and loyalty, it has understood afresh for itself the revelation of Jesus Christ. For the revelation of every age must be suited to the character of that age. The revelation of Jesus Christ is not like a treatise, it is not a series of propositions about God, which men are passively to receive once for all; it is the living, growing, ever fresh revelation of a many-sided Personality full of the force that comes from God. Men will realize this revelation in different ways in different ages; part may come to light at one time, part at another. Sayings which have long lain hardly noticed are one day found to be keys to unlock a treasure, and give insight into the things of the Spirit beyond what we dreamt of. There is a vitality in Christ's example and teaching, which has a permanent effect in quickening the spiritual life of man. His sayings fall like seed upon the human heart and take root there: some germinate in one generation and some in another; each generation seizes on its own proper nutriment, and finds in His teaching the special lesson that it requires.

¶ 'The slave,' says Dr Rendel Harris, 'found the sealed orders of his emancipation among Christ's papers.' It was an extraordinary thing that John Newton, author of 'How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds,' could summon the Christian officers of his ship to a prayer-meeting in his cabin, while underneath the very boards on which they knelt the wretched slaves were dying like flies in indescribable conditions of dirt, overcrowding, and disease. But the time came when Newton saw more clearly the implications of the gospel which he held and taught.

> God sends his teachers into every age,
> To every clime and every race of man,
> With revelations fitted to their growth
> And shape of mind.

3. In the twentieth century Christ has many things to tell us still. Never perhaps since the time of the Reformation has any age been so definitely called upon to adjust the claims of old creeds and new ideas.

(1) There is a movement now in the world of Science, which is feeling after a spiritual interpretation of the universe and beginning to ask questions about fundamental presuppositions, hitherto taken for granted, about the meaning of the universe as a whole. It is realizing that all its discoveries lead to that sense of mystery which is the vestibule of God's presence. To this movement the attitude of the Church must be one of the fullest sympathy and trust. It is not for the Church to pronounce formally either for or against any conclusions which in any sphere sincere scientific method may reach. But its members will be ready to accept whatever truths in the region of natural science or historical criticism seem to be really established, and to welcome them as new revelations of the Divine working, knowing that the Spirit of Truth is not divided, and that no revelation of God in Science can be finally inconsistent with His revelation in Christ.

¶ 'Remember,' says Dean Inge, 'that the new knowledge has as good a right to hear and speak in its own tongue the wonderful works of God as the educated Christian in the fourth and fifth centuries had to formulate the Christian faith in terms of the new-Platonic philosophy. What philosophy was then science is now.'

(2) Again, there is now an ardent and far-spread desire to give a spiritual basis to national, social, and industrial life. It arises inevitably in the hearts of a generation which has seen a material conception of civilization plunging the world into the most destructive war in history. It inspires the hopes, anxious but persistent, which surround the fortunes of the League of Nations. It speaks in the plea that if there is to be peace and progress in industry a new spirit must come. When men think, they recognize that this new spirit cannot be created by, but must itself create, the outward system of national and industrial life, that it must come from 'within,' or, for the words mean the same thing, from 'above.' When they try to describe it, it is seen to be only, after all, the Spirit of Christ. Here, surely, is a movement springing from the Divine Spirit in the heart of man.

There are indeed persuasive voices urging that 'the religion of the spirit' has no concern with the affairs of State and industries, that it calls us away from the things that are seen and temporal to the things that are unseen and eternal, to communion with God and citizenship in a heavenly city. It is a plea to which we do well to listen: for it brings a wholesome rebuke to a one-sided claim too often implied that the Kingdom of God is an earthly paradise. But it is apt itself to be one-sided. The religion of Christ is not only a religion of refuge. It is a religion of redemption. It is the religion of faith in a Divine Redeemer who came down from heaven and took upon Him the body and common life of man in order that they might be transformed into the likeness of the Divine Ideal.

¶ Those who, faced by the sin and sorrow of the world, can only say, 'Wait for heaven,' have no gospel for our generation, nor are they true to the mind of Christ. Equally unhelpful are those at the other end who look only to cleaner drains, higher wages, and better houses. Change of environment and change of heart are two parts of one great process, and to work for either change *in isolation from the other* is bad sociology, bad psychology, and bad religion.[1]

Of course the Church has no mission to determine political or industrial affairs. Its sphere is the spirit. But the spirit is all-important. It must come first—not a sentiment or aspiration, but a primary principle of action. It must rule in the realm of motives and purposes which, far more than any so-called laws, is the spring from which political or economic action flows. We have to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and then all these things will be added to us—the things for which States and industries provide. If, then, in this longing for a spiritual basis of social life, the Divine Spirit is speaking from the heart of man, with what earnestness must we pray that the same Spirit within the Church will take of the things of Christ and declare them to the citizens of this generation?

An Ever-Present Guide

John xvi. 13.—'When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.'

THE day of Pentecost has been called the birthday of the Church, and while it would be difficult

[1] E. S. Woods, *A Faith that Works*, 21.

to assign any special day for that event, the title means that with the coming of the Holy Spirit the disciples of Christ became conscious of their mission in the world and the Divine resources which were theirs for the task. In this passage, however, we are not looking back, but forward. When Jesus spoke these words to His disciples it was in the mood of anticipation. He was trying to tell them something of what would happen when the separation, now hanging over their heads like a dark threat, should become an accomplished fact.

The question which haunted the minds of the disciples at this hour was what would happen when their Master had been taken away from them? How would they fare without that Presence which had meant so much to them and carried them so far? It must have seemed to them that life had taken them so far on its journey, and then left them to face the prospect of utter desolation. There is no hint of any such spirit of unreadiness in the words of the Master. Over all these closing words of His there is a strange peace as though the occasion had been long foreseen and prepared for. He, too, looks forward as His followers were doing, but He does not see desolation. He sees continuous growth and development. He sees no sudden and tragic termination to the work on which they have been engaged. He promises these men a Living Spirit as their guide. He assures them that they will not be left to their own resources. And the Name He gives to this guiding Spirit is the Spirit of Truth.

And though
No more thou hear the voice nor feel the hand
Thou lovest, yet thou art not desolate;
I leave thee to a better Friend than I.
Love Him, and trust Him, follow Him with pains,
— Not easily—the grace is for the strife;
And whatsoever trial He may lay
Upon thee, trust Him through it, and give thanks;
And when thy heart is heavy think on Him,
And when thy need is greatest, call on Him.
Hold fast God's promise, and remember this—
Christ will not fail thee.[1]

1. The worst thing that could befall religion in the eyes of Christ was that it should become a dead thing divorced from any real touch with God. He met that spirit again and again in His work. He found men who lived in slavish obedience to an ancient law, and who elaborated it so as to cover the least detail of daily life. They obeyed the law and enforced it upon others, but the result was a meaningless routine. The law did not correspond in many of its details to any clear sense of what was God's will. Everything in religion harked back to the past, and discussion fixed upon whether Moses had meant this or that or the other thing. The result was that men had no feeling that God was in the present. Everything turned on ancient testimony. Jesus saw how men groaned under that burden, and further He saw that there were needs that the religion of law did not touch. There were men and women who had sinned, and stood condemned in the eyes of their fellows. They wanted a God who would stoop down and lift them up. There were men and women bowed under the burden of disease. While others discussed whether the disease was due to their sin, they were fainting for some Divine love to touch them and release them from the intolerable burden of suffering. Jesus brought that to them. No one came anywhere near to Jesus without feeling that God was an ever-present Spirit. The ancient testimony faded in the light of a far more glorious present. Jesus felt the horror of a religion which was dead, the meaningless persistence of old rules, the routine of outward conformity to something which belonged merely to the past. And what He promised to His disciples at this moment before leaving them was that His religion meant an ever-living Spirit to guide them. It was to be no dead thing for all the generations to come, no 'dead fact stranded on the shore of the oblivious years,' as Whittier has said. God was still to be near, and His Spirit of Truth was to go on leading His people into larger visions. That was what the coming of the Spirit was to mean. It was the pledge of God's Presence with the souls of men, the promise of growth and progress.

Is not that exactly what most of us feel we are in need of in our lives to-day? Is not the recurring disaster of religion precisely this thing against which the Spirit of Christ revolted, the tendency to answer the present by the past, and to bind down the souls of men to something which was written long ago? By a strange

[1] Mrs H. E. Hamilton King, *The Disciples*.

irony, one of those ironies of which history contains many instances, the religion of Jesus has fallen into the same bondage as the earlier law. The standard of truth is sought in the past, and urgent problems of the present are referred to a decision which was reached by the Fathers of the Church centuries ago. The thing which many feel is that religion does not speak in the accents of present conviction, and conveys no impression of a light which is shining from the Fount of all Light for the needs of to-day. The letter is to the forefront. The Living Spirit of Truth is in the background. What men everywhere are needing is the ever-present Christ, One who speaks in the minds of men now, One who can be sought and found as the answer to the tragic needs of the soul. It is no answer to that need to point to the Christian tradition. Men need a Presence, a living touch with God. They can be satisfied with nothing less. The Church as a Church does not satisfy and cannot. It is a human thing. It has the weaknesses of all human institutions. The Creeds do not satisfy. They are abstract statements of truth, too intellectualized to go home to the heart. Men long for the Spirit, the Presence, the Power.

2. Is not this promise of Christ related to that hunger of soul? Is it not this need of man of which Christ was thinking, the perpetual need for the Living God? Then if that is so, the Holy Spirit is at work in every experience which brings to us the consciousness of God's presence. It is not confined to a select circle; it comes to every man in the common ways of life whose heart is lit by the thought that God is near to him in love.

All souls that struggle and aspire,
  All hearts of prayer by thee are lit;
And, dim or clear, thy tongues of fire
On dusky tribes and twilight centuries sit.

Nor bounds, nor clime, nor creed thou know'st,
  Wide as our need thy favours fall;
The white wings of the Holy Ghost
Stoop, seen or unseen, o'er the heads of all.

Most of us, all of us, have had our moments of insight into life's deeper meaning. If we could only talk to each other quietly we should find that those clearer moments did not come by the same path. Some have found the sense of God most vividly in the Sanctuary, to some the Sacrament of our faith is the sacred approach to the most intimate experience of the Divine Presence, but there would be others who would have to say that God had touched them most closely in some moment when the beauty of the world had laid their souls under its spell, or when human love has made them conscious of an Infinite Presence; others would tell the story of how in some service to their fellows they had come to know that they were serving a Higher Will than their own.

¶ The paths that lead to God are many and diverse. The question was recently put to a number of well-known laymen, 'When does God seem most real to you, and what is it that seems to bring Him near?' And here are three replies:

A *scientist*: 'Every man of us has a shy and lonely thing in his heart which he dare not lose on pain of no longer being a man. One does not often speak of it, and then only softly; but since you ask as a friend, I will say that it is in the Holy Communion that God is nearest and most real to me. Under the forms of bread and wine God touches me and feeds me. How it can be so I do not know; I only know that it is so. Would that I were more worthy of such a blessing; but if I were I should not need it.'

A *journalist*: 'For me the road to God is through beauty. There is too much beauty in the world for any ends of mere utility. It is this overplus of beauty that is the best evidence of the existence of God and the token of His presence. The song of a thrush in the evening, a forest vista in which the slant of trees and the shadings of light are such as to fill the artist with a wild, sad joy; or looking into the face of a flower—its delicacy, its exquisite tracery—make God actual to me.'

A *banker*: 'I think that if every one would every day do some kind act for someone other than themselves, the burden of the world would be lifted; and I try not to wait for the others to begin. It seems to me that such a practice leads directly to spirituality; that is, to an experience of God, who is known not in words but in deeds.'

Let us be sure that in every moment when life seems to us a great thing, to be lived with all courage and faith and love we can command, the Spirit of God is uttering its voice in our

mind and heart. That is the way in which God does speak to men. He does not come in mystic vision and speak with the voice that we can hear with outward ear; He speaks within, and what we might call the voice of the higher self is in reality the Voice of God Himself. So many of us miss the sense of the Living Spirit by thinking that God must come in some strange way removed from the normal, and we prize our best moments as though they were our own, when in truth all the power of vision and insight and love we possess come to us direct from the Heart of the Great Giver of all good.

3. In all the progress of these days, in all the larger prospects which open out before humanity, we must learn to see the presence of that Spirit of Truth about which Christ spoke. Mankind is not left to itself to work out stumblingly its own salvation; there is a Guide and Comforter, and for all of us He is near. He is not different from Christ Himself. Everything that was in Christ as He walked the ways of men is enthroned in the heart and purpose of God. That light did not flash before the eyes of men for a few wonderful years, and then die out again for ever into the darkness. 'His touch has still its ancient power,' and if only we can bring the simplest faith and the lowliest love we shall find that He is still with us. There is still healing to be found, and forgiveness, and strength. Religion is not a dead thing. It is a living spirit. That is the message of the Spirit's coming. So we will not stop at saying 'On that far-off day of Pentecost He came.' Our word shall be of to-day, not of yesterday. We will remind ourselves that He is among us still, an ever-present Guide, and that to every heart that seeks Him He is near. Let no one face life without feeling that there is for us all a living touch with God, and without the inner resolve that we will seek to know more of what it means, that we may become Christ-filled men and women.

Spirit of purity and grace,
Our weakness, pitying, see;
O make our hearts Thy dwelling-place,
And worthier Thee.

The Price of Joy

John xvi. 22.—'I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.'

1. The three great festivals of the Christian Church are those which celebrate the birth of the Son of God into the world, His victory over death, and the descent of the Holy Spirit. What was the significance of this choice of the three great days on which we are bidden by the Church to be joyous and thankful? What were the three great festivals of the Jewish year? They were the Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The first of these fell at the vernal equinox; the second at the end of the early Eastern harvest; the third at the end of the vintage. They seem to be old agricultural festivals, made more sacred by being connected with great events in the national history. This is the history of most religious festivals all over the world; they are connected with the seasons of the year and with cherished memories in a nation's history. 'They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest,' says Isaiah, 'and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.' We ourselves have felt the want of a day to celebrate the joy of harvest, and as our harvest falls in the Church's dead season we have established everywhere an unauthorized festival in the autumn, which, in the popular estimation, ranks with the great days of the Church's calendar. Easter, too, is popularly regarded as a spring festival. We decorate our churches with spring flowers; while Christmas has a peculiar character as the feast of family affection, the festival of home—a word so dear to us all.

But the Church was guided by other reasons in choosing her three great days. They commemorate the three stages in the redemption of mankind, and the foundation of Christ's Church. There are no more majestic passages in the New Testament than the opening verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Prologue to the Gospel of St John. The glad tidings of great joy were of joy that sprang out of pain, loss, and disappointment. That is really the keynote of the Epistle to the Hebrews; the Fathers to whom God spake through their prophets in times past had all their dearest hopes disappointed. They saw Israel conquered and enslaved. They died in faith, not having

received the promises, nor were the promises ever fulfilled as they hoped.

The Christian Church was born amid the death-throes of Jewish nationalism. All the hopes which the patriotic Jew associated with the name of David, and the hope of a Messiah, had to be surrendered before he could accept the true Son of David, the true Messiah, as his lord and king. He dreamed of a great conqueror. 'Gird thee with thy sword, and with thy thigh, O thou most mighty.' That was the dream; and the fulfilment was a Babe lying in a manger.

They all were looking for a king
To slay their foes, and lift them high:
Thou cam'st a little baby thing
That made a woman cry.[1]

If we turn to Easter we find the same thing. Easter celebrates the victory of Christ over death. But was not this also a joy that sprang out of bitter sorrow, again following cruel loss and disappointment? The joy which the Mother of Jesus felt when she saw her Babe was a joy which had its roots in the pains of childbirth. The joy which she felt when she saw Him, or heard that others had seen Him after His resurrection, was a joy that had its root in a deeper pain. The sword had pierced through her very soul when she saw her Son dying on the Cross.

Our third great festival has the same character. 'It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.' Think of the desolation which the disciples felt when they had lost their Master for the second time. He had gone away, leaving them lonely. And then came the gift of the Holy Spirit to take His place, never again to leave them. That is what our Lord meant when He said, 'I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.' Now, it is no accident that all our great festivals should have this character. Not joy simply, not mere light-hearted rejoicing, like the joy of harvest, or as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. Each commemorates a joy that sprang out of the heart of a sorrow; a birth after travail pangs; a resurrection after a bitter death; a new kind of intimacy after a tragic parting. This is always the character of Christian joy. It is the deepest secret of Christianity.

¶ Christian joy is a happiness which has passed through and overcome suffering, and has attained to life through the gate of death.[1]

2. Other religions have had their merry seasons and their sad seasons. The worshippers have put themselves in sympathy with Nature; they have laughed and cried in unison with the changing year. But their laughter and tears have been mere froth and bubble compared with the joy of Christmas and Easter and Pentecost. Their grief and rejoicing have been like the ready tears and laughter of a child. Christian joy is the joy of the grown man. The joy that forgets pain is followed by the pain that forgets joy. The joy that has conquered pain is, so far as it goes, a joy that no man can take from us. So far as it goes, for there are higher joys hitherto undreamt of, which must be approached through the gate of higher pains hitherto unfelt. Mary's joy at the birth of her Son was great and pure. She remembered no more the anguish in the joy that a God-man was born into the world. But still greater was her joy when God highly exalted Him, and gave Him the Name which is above every name, through suffering far greater than the pains of childbirth. And the highest joy of all was the consciousness that the great promise had been fulfilled: 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;' and the gate which admitted the disciples to this joy was the desolation of being left alone when Christ was finally withdrawn from their eyes.

3. Christian joy must always be earned; it must always be at the price of some sacrifice. The lesson of Christmas is not so stern as that of Good Friday and Easter. The Church does not remind us on that day that we must be crucified with Christ if we wish to rise with Him. The desire of all nations came into the world with the brighter message of peace on earth, goodwill to men. The sacrifice which must be the price of our Christmas happiness is mainly that of casting away all unkindness, jealousy, hard thoughts of each other. This requirement goes, however, deeper than we sometimes realize. 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus who, being in the form of God,

[1] George Macdonald.

[1] W. R. Inge, *Speculum Animæ*, 37.

thought not equality with God a thing to be snatched at, but emptied himself, and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men.' He emptied Himself for the love of mankind. And if the Holy Babe is to be born in our hearts, there must be a complete emptying of all thoughts hard and selfish and proud and unloving in our character; there must be a real willingness to receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, a real readiness to accept goodness and purity and meekness as Divine, in spite of our natural combativeness and assertiveness and worship of successful force.

Once in my strength I came to God
With martial tramp and clang.
The temple trembled as I trod,
And the startled echoes rang.

But I found the altar lone and bare,
And the place of God was chill;
No sign of the living fire was there,
And the voice of God was still.

'Why art Thou silent, when I come
To do some work for Thee?
Thine altar cold, and the oracles dumb,
And scarcely a light to see?'

And I heard a whisper that stirred the gloom,
And my soul sank quiet and mild:
'There is might enow in the world—make room
For the day of the little child.

Ye will find no flame in My house again,
And earth will be fever-wild,
Until ye bring to the strifes of men
The love of a little child.' [1]

Loneliness

John xvi. 32.—'Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.'

The penalty of all true greatness is the sense of loneliness. The great soul dwells in a sphere apart from his fellows. There are few who can think his thoughts after him—few who can share his visions. It was pre-eminently so with Jesus. Again and again we see Him uttering some great word, and then looking wistfully into the faces of His nearest disciples for some token of sympathy, some sign of bare understanding, only to meet with disappointment. The solitariness of high vision and deep insight, the solitude that always comes with the possession of truth, too big for others to comprehend—all this was part of Jesus' daily experience.

1. It was not to love of solitude that the loneliness of Christ was due, for He had a passionate craving for fellowship. It was rather of an internal kind.

(1) *His mission to mankind* made Him lonely. The thought of the world had pointed to His coming, the human heart in its yearning had advertised a place that none but He could fill, and for eight hundred years prophets had painted His portrait until it might have been expected any one would have recognized Him at sight. Yet no preparation quite made the world ready for Him. He fulfils the Scriptures in a most wonderful way, but it is not in the flesh and blood fashion but after an entirely spiritual manner. In a world that was in utter delusion as to wherein riches, power, and blessing consisted, nothing seemed more strange than the truth. So the Incarnation took mankind by surprise.

He was the deepest need of every one who crossed His path; the food men craved, the rest they sought. He did not come into the world as an alien visitor; He stepped forth from the secret soul of things; His was the voice that had whispered low in every heart. But the last thing man knows is what he wants, and the last person he understands is himself. When men are living on the surface, to speak to their hearts is like talking an unknown tongue. Just because He was sent to speak to the heart of man, it has taken centuries for men to understand what He said.

(2) *The secret of His Personality* made Him solitary. That strange thing we call, for want of a better name, His sinlessness, separated Him from men. There can be no doubt that Jesus was absolutely without a sense of sin; never does He join with us in our prayers of confession, not even when He teaches us to pray as those who need forgiveness. And yet He was as unconscious of goodness as He was of sin. His hatred of sin was fierce and unsleeping, and yet no one has ever so openly displayed his

[1] L. Maclean Watt.

sympathy with sinners, and the great inner concern of His life was to bear the sins of the world. His very nearness to us makes Him stand alone.

It seems also that His secret was not clearly known to Himself. It is impossible to extract from His teaching a direct claim of being that which the Church confesses Him to be. And this is sometimes made a point of attack upon the Church's faith; as if it were not essential to the Incarnation that He should not know who He was. And it is obvious that as He comes to know Himself He can find no category for what He feels Himself to be. It is this which accounts for the reluctance to adopt the Messianic title; it is not that it is too great for His modesty; it is inadequate to His deepest consciousness. But in great moments of ecstasy or yearning the secret escapes from His lips, He speaks with the voice that has called men all down the rebellious centuries, bidding them come to Him and He will be their rest. There is something in the consciousness of Jesus which is too wide for an individual member of the human race, higher than anything the sons of men are aware of; and it is all so immediate, innate, unarguable. This consciousness was evidently made clear to Jesus through the great loneliness that life forced upon Him. Rejected by His home, His nation, and His disciples, He found how near the Father was to Him.

¶ Says Newman in one of his letters: 'God intends me to be lonely. He has so framed my mind that I am in a great measure beyond the sympathies of other people, and thrown upon Himself.'

¶ Joan. Where would you all have been now if I had heeded that sort of truth? There is no help, no counsel, in any of you. Yes: I am alone on earth: I have always been alone. My father told my brothers to drown me if I would not stay to mind his sheep while France was bleeding to death: France might perish if only our lambs were safe. I thought France would have friends at the court of the king of France; and I find only wolves fighting for pieces of her poor torn body. I thought God would have friends everywhere, because He is the friend of every one; and in my innocence I believed that you who now cast me out would be like strong towers to keep harm from me. But I am wiser now; and nobody is any the worse for being wiser. Do not think you can frighten me by telling me that I am alone. France is alone; and God is alone; and, what is my loneliness before the loneliness of my country and my God? I see now that the loneliness of God is His strength. Well, my loneliness shall be my strength too: it is better to be alone with God: His friendship will not fail me, nor His counsel, nor His love.[1]

'I am not alone,' He says, 'for the Father is with me.' The sense of an inward Divine sympathy steals into the silence made by the hush of the world's busy activities, and fills that silence with an ineffable peace. The consciousness of a Divine companionship occupies all the vacancy made by human desertion. We can feel that sense of Divine fellowship; we can discern its peace and strength and solace throughout the story of the Cross.

And what is the secret of that sense of Divine companionship in the midst of human solitude, which so fills the story of Christ's life and particularly His Passion? Humanly speaking, it lies in that diligent and habitual practice of the presence of God which we discern everywhere throughout the story of His active ministry. It is the open secret of habitual prayer. In those lonely nights of vigil on solitary mountain peaks between the busy days and above the crowded valleys of incessant activity—there are hidden the secret springs that fed the river of His peace and joy which made glad the desert wastes of solitude and suffering.

2. We all have our seasons of loneliness.

(1) There are times when, at the touch of *some great sorrow*, some profound experience, the world suddenly melts away from us and we are left utterly to ourselves. The darkness closes in about us and sets us apart from the rest of the world. Our grief becomes the very atmosphere of our life; in it we live, move, and have our being. The commonplaces of consolation, perhaps, are spoken by some, but they seem meaningless, for the most part. Even the voices of our friends sound faint and far off, as if they came out of another world, a world in which we ourselves once lived. Nobody can really enter into and share with us our own peculiar and personal sorrow. But if we have learned to walk with God in the common day of our ordinary living, He becomes to us now our sure refuge in our night of sorrow. There is a subtle

[1] George Bernard Shaw, *Saint Joan of Arc.*

sense of an inward Divine sympathy and understanding so different from the human consolations that can reach us only from the outside. Some One knows, some One understands better than we do ourselves.

(2) Then, in some measure, do we not all know the awful loneliness of *secret sin*? And all sins are really secret so far as we can keep them so. Some of them we dare not confess even to ourselves. The base motives, the half-conscious hypocrisy, the duality of our inner selves, we would fain hide them from all eyes, even our own. And how terrible is the secret when at some moment it is involuntarily unveiled to us, and we are forced to stand face to face with it, when perhaps it climbs to the housetop, and there proclaims itself before the world. Is there any way of escape from that loneliness? If we have cultivated the friendship and fellowship of Christ, we can tell it all to Him, for not only can He understand the guilt of it, which is all that men see, but He understands also what nobody else can, the weakness and infirmity which left us wellnigh defenceless against the power of those temptations. If we share the intolerable burden with Him, open all its guilt to Him, we shall find the peace of His pardon cleansing us, and we shall find also springing up within us the grace of a new hope and the strength of a new moral manhood. Even in this greatest of all solitudes we can say, 'I am not alone, but through Christ the Father is with me.'

(3) So it is also when *some great vision of truth or beauty* dawns upon us. We fain would share that with some one else. But sudden shyness or reticence seizes us; we are not sure of the sympathy and understanding even of our most beloved. Perhaps we fear the suspicion of hypocrisy or cant, or perhaps we cannot put the thing itself into any intelligible language. How dumb we all become when it comes to expressing the highest and best things we feel and know. But to feel that there is One who understands perfectly just because He is the very Author and Inspirer of all that is deepest and best in us—that irradiates the loneliness of our joy with the joy of a perfect sympathy! And in this infinite capacity for sympathy Christ is indeed God to us, for to know Him is to know the Father also.

3. Christ gives to all who make trial of His way this sense of companionship—indispensable in the crowded loneliness of our generation, to a strong courageous life. Solitude may be essential to soul-health, but solitude may prove our undoing if there is no gate by which we can enter into the presence of God. Down the ages folk of many temperaments and traditions have found in the religion of Jesus a sense of companionship which fortified and renewed their spirits. Even now, as in the 'dim ages of faith,' men and women are finding in the comradeship of the Master the truth which He Himself affirmed when He seemed utterly forsaken: 'I am not alone, for the Father is with me.' Amid the dark and hostile forces Livingstone found this to be one of Christ's choicest boons for valour on the field. On many a lonely trek he was much cheered as he sang to himself the Latin rendering of the well-known hymn:

> Jesus, the very thought of Thee,
> With sweetness fills my breast.

¶ Christina Forsyth, the 'loneliest woman in Africa,' lived for thirty years in a native village seeking to win the people for Christ. 'Mrs Forsyth is a marvellous woman, living all alone like that: it is wonderful what some people will do for a hobby,' was the comment of a fellow white woman, a trader's wife. When Mrs Forsyth was asked if she never found the isolation and loneliness oppressive, she quietly replied, 'I am never alone,' for, as her biographer adds, 'Her Master was very real and close to her: He was her intimate companion and counsellor.'

¶ Maltbie D. Babcock, in his crowded ministry in Baltimore and New York, testified:

> I need not journey far
> This dearest friend to see.
> Companionship is always mine;
> He makes His home with me.
>
> I envy not the Twelve;
> Nearer to me is He.
> The life He once lived here on earth
> He lives again in me.

How shall we make real to ourselves this companionship of Christ in our time of need? How shall we find the Father with us in our hour of loneliness? Only by the diligent and habitual practice of that Presence at all other times in

the day of ordinary life. Plainly and simply, the secret is the open but largely forgotten secret of prayer. Prayer is largely a lost art with the busy external and superficial modern Christian. He does not know how to commune or enter into fellowship with Christ; and that alone is real prayer—the simple talking with God in the quiet solitude of the heart, the silent mingling of spirit with Spirit. We must cultivate a sensitiveness and responsiveness to the presence of God if we would realize it.

¶ Here is a ship sailing in the Atlantic; possibly the atmosphere all about it is charged with the messages of wireless telegraphy. The man in the radio-room is catching these messages because he has a receiver attuned to the instrument of the sender. He is catching them because he is tuned-in to them. If we are only tuned-in to the physical universe we are even unconscious of any other. To receive Christ's messages and realize His presence, we must sensitize and attune our spirits to His spirit, and that can be done only by the practice of prayer.

Victory

John xvi. 33.—'In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.'

1. THERE is a sad and true sense in which the warning, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation,' applies to all men. Pain and sickness, loss and death, the monotony of hard, continuous, unwelcome toil, disappointed hopes, and all the other 'ills that flesh is heir to,' afflict us all. But our Lord is not speaking here about the troubles that befall men as men, or about the evils which dog them because they are mortal or because they are bad, but of the more mysterious sorrows which fall upon them because they are good. 'In the world ye have tribulation' is the proper rendering and reading. It had already begun, and it was to be the standing condition and certain lot of all that followed Him.

Jesus exhibited all the hazards plainly in the view of His followers. By certain parables and by many vivid words about crosses, and by direct prophecies of persecutions, He unfolded to them the kind of career it was to which He invited them, and thus warned them. Without equivocation He told them the 'world' would dislike and hate them, even as it had hated Him. The 'world'? Yes, that is, as Dr Gore truly defines it, 'life organized apart from God.'

The warning is plain enough, that if a man seek to live in the fellowship of Christ, he must expect his share of the world's dislike and persecution. A man who shows his colours, Christ's colours, will sooner or later draw the world's fire. He must show his colours, as did his Leader. There was a spirit in Christ which, when the world was juggling with and confusing the ancient and simple distinctions of right and wrong, could not but speak out in an appeal to immutable moral principles. There was a spirit in Him which could not behold the tyranny of great castes without launching His swift arrows against them. There was a spirit in Him which hated hypocrisy in Church and State. All this loosed off the batteries of the world against Him. There was a spirit in Him which returned good for evil done Himself. Even for that He was disliked; there burned against Him the strange perversity that is often alive in those who are put to shame by gentleness shown them. Truly, a disciple of this Captain need not expect to be comfortable with the 'world.' And the same applies to Churches.

¶ 'I am not given to speaking ungenerously of the Roman Church,' says Dr A. Boyd Scott, 'but I have noted a significant thing in the attitude of the world towards it. It is this: in the talk or books of worldly people, who are frankly aliens to things religious and ecclesiastical and treat them with light or heavy scorn, I have often enough caught a sympathetic bearing, sometimes almost a subservient bearing, to the accommodating humanism of the Roman Church. If I were a priest therein, I should be suspicious of this, because neither Church nor individual can be thus commended by the world without feeling rather uneasy about it.'

We are not to court tribulation or wilfully bring it on our own heads, but neither are we to make concessions of principle in order to secure immunity. There is such a hunger in the heart for peace that we are willing to pay almost any price for it. And the price that we pay is often that of principle and of testimony. Many a man has got peace with the world by allowing it to master him. He has found peace because he has ceased resistance and become gradually conformed to the life about him. In a certain superficial sense he has mastered the

world, that is, he has made it yield to him many of its secrets and its treasures, but in a very real way it has mastered him. The world conquers us when it comes between us and God, when it fills our desires, when it absorbs our energies, when it blinds our eyes to the things unseen and eternal.

2. In contrast to that we have the final word of the text: 'I have overcome the world.' Our Lord Jesus conquered all opposed to Him. Calm, confident victory rests upon every page of the sacred story. As one reads the narrative of conquest, one is amazed at the prolific and abundant spiritual energy which everywhere confronts the powers of ill. Our Lord overcame the world; He never bowed to the enticements or the glitter; they would make Him a king of the worldly order, but He rejected the allurement and went away to pray. He overcame the flesh; His life is characterized by order and beauty; on the one hand there was no harsh asceticism, and on the other hand there was no unseemly excess. He overcame the devil; they met again and again; 'the prince of this world cometh'; he was ever coming, but he came to no purpose, and he achieved no triumph. Jesus Christ was always victor over the antagonists which stand in our path to-day.

¶ 'I have overcome the world.' 'It is,' says Luther, in his own fervent way, 'as if He wished to say: Write the I with a very large letter, so as to grasp it in your eyes and heart. The victory is already there, and all is overcome; only be undespairing and hold fast to it. All has been done; world, devil, and death are beaten and lying on the ground; heaven, righteousness, and life have the victory.'

And because He has overcome through what Milton calls His humiliation and strong sufferance, He bids His disciples be of good cheer. That seems an irrelevant way of arguing. What can it profit us when we are carried away by the vain ambitions of the world, or overwhelmed by its temptations and sorrows to be told that He, the strong One, overcame; that He scorned the repute of men, the wealth, the comfort which might have been within His reach, that in acute pain or heart-breaking sorrow He could say, 'I have overcome'?

To know that there has been even One who has been proof against the world is a strength and a joy to all earnest souls. And merely from this point of view, the unworldly life of Jesus passed in the world affords a rallying-point for noble effort, and exercises a constant power over the thoughts of men. But how inadequate would this be to account for the inspiring words, 'Be of good cheer.' We must go deeper than that. 'I have overcome the world, and I will come and put My overcoming Spirit into your weakness, and fill you with My own victorious life, and make your hands strong to war and your fingers to fight; and be in you the conquering and omnipotent power.' Christ's victory is ours, and we are victors in it, because He is more than the pattern of brave warfare, because He is the Son of God, who gave Himself for us, and gives Himself to us, and dwells in us our strength and our righteousness.

¶ A friend tells us that when Dr John Brown, the kindly physician of Edinburgh, lay dying, she visited him one day after church, and he asked her what had been the text. 'I told him, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." "Wonderful words," he said, folding his hands and closing his eyes, and repeated slowly, "'Be of good cheer'"; then, after a pause, "And from *Him*, our Saviour!"'[1]

3. The condition of that victory's being ours, is the simple act of reliance upon Him and upon it. 'This,' writes the Apostle, 'is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith.' And by that he means that our faith brings us into contact with that one great victory over the world which for all time was won by Jesus Christ. We can appropriate Christ's conquest if we trust Him. The might of it and some portion of the reality of it passes into our nature in the measure in which we rely upon Him. We are brought into living fellowship with Him. All the stimulation of example, and all that lives lofty and pure can do for us, is done for us in transcendent fashion by the life of Jesus Christ. And all that lives lofty and pure can never do for us is done in unique fashion by the life and death of Him whose life and death are alike the victory over the world and the pattern for us.

¶ I remember reading an account, I think it was, of the Eiffel Tower in a thunderstorm. There was an aerial chamber in which one might sit, with the lightnings playing on every side. Indeed, the lofty summit attracted the electric

[1] E. T. M'Laren, *Dr John Brown*, 24.

currents, and drew them to the ground. But the chamber was so constructed that one within it remained unscathed. In the centre of commotion, circled by the electric blaze, there where all the storm was raging, he was safer than in the most sheltered retreat.[1]

Christian Optimism

John xvi. 33.—'Be of good cheer.'

This salutation of Jesus to His disciples is very significant. It indicates suggestively the attitude which we as His followers ought to take up towards the future more immediate or more remote. It ought to be one of confident yet chastened optimism. In one of the beautiful Vailima prayers Robert Louis Stevenson asks that we may meet every day as it comes to us, whatever it may hold in store for us, with a smiling face. That is what is meant by being of good cheer. It need hardly be pointed out how much depends upon what lies behind this attitude to the future. There may be no thoughtful consideration of the realities of life—of the problems, the difficulties and perplexities that must be faced. That is far from the attitude to which Christ invites us when He says, 'Be of good cheer.' There is behind the optimism of the Christian a calm trust in the Divine Saviour as having all power in heaven and on earth, bringing the firm assurance that no difficulties in the path will be too great for Him to conquer. There is faith in the unfailing goodness of God as revealed to us in Christ, and in His Almightiness, so that His loving purpose toward us cannot possibly be defeated.

¶ Whittier, in answer to a question about the perplexing problems life often presents to us, writes:

I have no answer for myself or thee,
Save that I learned beside my mother's knee;
'All is of God that is, and is to be;
And God is good.' Let this suffice us still,
Resting in childlike trust upon His will
Who moves to His great ends unthwarted by the ill.

If we look at some of the occasions on which Jesus during His earthly life uttered the salutation we shall discover the grounds on which this optimism securely rests.

[1] R. F. Horton.

1. There is the occasion referred to here, in which He places before us as the ground of this confidence *His victory over the world.* 'These things have I spoken to you that *in me* ye might have peace. *In the world* ye shall have tribulation. But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' He places before us two spheres with which we are in contact in this present life. In our external life we are in contact with the world. Jesus never contemplated that His disciples should cut themselves off from the world of their fellow-men around them, and in seclusion from them and in isolation cultivate the religious life. The monastic conception of Christian discipleship is far removed from the conception of it prominent in His teaching. As He had been sent into the world—the world of sinning and suffering men and women—on a mission of redemption, so He would send His disciples into the same world on a similar mission: 'As thou hast sent me into the world even so have I sent them into the world.' He intimates to us very plainly that in this sphere of the world in which we seek to carry out this mission we shall encounter forces hostile to our Christian faith and service. 'In the world ye shall have tribulation.' The world with those things sin has introduced into it, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, will seek to draw us aside from the path of loyalty to our Divine Master. It is all the more dangerous in this respect when it may assume a certain Christian character and tells us that certain questionable things are quite lawful to us. When the world fails in seeking to undermine our allegiance to Christ it vents its enmity to us in many trying ways. We find by bitter experience the truth of Christ's words, 'If ye were of the world the world would love her own, but because ye are not of the world but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.' These hard things are used by Christ to shape our Christian character and to touch it to finer issues. While this reconciles us to them, even brings us joy in them, it does not take away their hardness.

But while in our external life we are in contact with this world, in our inner life we are in close contact with a different sphere. We are *in Christ*, living in the spiritual atmosphere radiating from Him as our once crucified and now risen and glorified Redeemer. Here we have peace—calmness in the presence and pressure

of all opposition because we know that it cannot ultimately prevail. He who is leading us in this conflict with these hostile forces in the world is able, and more than able, to cope with all the opposition which they offer.

¶ The famous missionary, Alexander Mackay, of Uganda, was at times greatly disturbed and depressed by the fierce opposition encountered in seeking to win the people of that dark land to Christ. He was sometimes tempted to abandon it in despair. The way in which he recovered himself was by retiring to the secret place and there listening to the voice of Jesus saying to him, 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world,' or bathing his spirit in the atmosphere of the Psalms in which the ultimate triumph of God's cause is so confidently predicted.

2. On another occasion on which Jesus spoke these words, He presented as a ground of confidence *His victory over sin*. The salutation was addressed to the palsied man whom his friends carried on a couch and placed before Jesus as He was teaching in a house in Capernaum. This man's bodily trouble, whether caused by his own evil living or not, had quickened his conscience about his sin. He felt not only the burden of his physical disability but he felt even more the heavy burden of his guilt. Jesus reads his thoughts and meets his deepest unrest and need, 'Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.'

So long as sin stands in the way in the individual life the character can never be rightly constructed according to God's plan. All attempts at the reconstruction of character in which this element of sin is left untouched will egregiously fail from the highest point of view. Until a person is brought into a right relationship to God—a relationship of trust and love and obedience, a right and satisfactory relationship with those around him can never be established. As a great French writer has forcibly put it, 'You must get men and women to look upward and say, "Our Father which art in Heaven," ere you can get them to look around and say, "My brothers and sisters which are upon the earth."' This is an all-important point overlooked by many reformers. They leave altogether out of view the relationship to God disturbed by sin and needing to be rectified.

My faith is in holy freedom,
But till men are true and strong
No need to tell me it only means
Freedom to do the wrong.
One only thing I see clearly
In this welter of sorrow and sin,
And that is the fight which each man has
Is the fight for the Kingdom within.

A Kingdom of God can never be realized amongst men and women anywhere until the power that sin has acquired has been completely broken. Jesus in seeking a right order of things —a Kingdom of God—removes first of all this great obstacle. When we are overwhelmed with a sense of our own sinfulness our sins stand before us as barring the way to any true happiness or well-being. But Jesus comes and says, 'I can remove the seemingly insurmountable obstacle. I have dealt with human sin on Calvary's Cross, and have destroyed its power.' Jesus has commissioned His Church and His servants to exhibit Him as giving this release and in this way laying the stable foundation for the Kingdom of God. He assures them that in proclaiming this gospel in His name and in His strength they will succeed in leading men and women into the enjoyment of true liberty in every sphere.

3. On a third occasion on which Jesus gave this salutation it was *His abiding presence with His disciples* that was put forward as furnishing solid ground for their confidence. A fierce storm had overtaken the disciples as they were crossing the Lake of Galilee. They found themselves in the middle of the sheet of water, unable to make any headway against a strong opposing wind dashing the waves against their boat. They had left Jesus on the eastern shore behind them, and did not think of Him as being with them. When He did appear, in spite of such untoward conditions, His appearance seemed so incredible, it was easier to believe it was a phantom than the Lord Himself, and they cried out for fear. His word reassured them, and dispelled their terror. 'Be of good cheer. It is I. Be not afraid.' When they received Him into the boat the wind ceased and all the obstacles in the way of their progress were removed.

The barque of Christ's Church encounters many storms. Strong winds of opposition to

the claim of Christ to supremacy in all the spheres of human activity are at the present time blowing hard. Some are even pessimistic enough to dread that not only our Christianity but our civilization will become swamped in that tide of opposition. But this opposition will not hinder the Christian Church reaching its goal of seeing the Kingdom of God established everywhere.

¶ Björnsen the Norwegian poet was once asked what incident in his life had given him most pleasure. He replied that it was on one occasion when he had done something which had aroused the displeasure of the Storthing, the Norwegian Parliament. Some members of that body made their way to his house, just outside Christiania, and broke the poet's windows. Then they marched away singing the Norwegian National Anthem, 'Yes, we love this land of ours.' And Björnsen chuckled to himself, because he was the author of their song. They had smashed his windows, but they had to sing his song.

What Life Is

John xvii. 3.—'And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.'

1. When Jesus said these words the transitoriness of life was pressing upon Him and His disciples. All their life together was hurrying to its end. If we have ever heard suddenly that some state of things which had lasted long, and been full of happiness, was to be broken up, we may remember how everything belonging to it flashed into sudden brightness. The association, the sympathy, over which the knife was hanging, never seemed so dear. A sickening, despairing sense of instability seemed to come over us. Nothing seemed permanent or trustworthy. If we remember that, we know how these disciples felt. And then, when life seemed frailest and most unreliable, they heard these words of Jesus to God the Father: 'This is life eternal.' The assertion of a sort of life, something in life, which lasted and did not go to pieces, must have put strength and courage into their frightened hearts again.

What is it whose eternity Jesus proclaims so confidently? When everything else stops, what is it that goes on? When everything else decays, what is it that is imperishable? Jesus says it is the knowledge of God and of Himself—'To know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' Now this must mean, and in the Bible always does mean, a personal relationship with God and Christ. It is not mere absolute knowledge. Man cannot know God absolutely. It is what He is *to us*, not what He is in Himself, that we may know of God. So that to know Christ and God is to have to do with Christ and God in the way of love and service. And Jesus says that the permanent part of our life—that which is eternal—is the part which has to do with God. Other kinds of knowledge may add to the richness of life, but this is life itself.

2. If the knowledge of God is thus vital it is all-important that we should know how to acquire it. Let the Bible supply us with some answers

(1) The Old Testament supplies one in a familiar psalm, 'Be still, and know that I am God.' *Be still and know!* Here is quietness leading to knowledge; meditation resulting in assurance. Can we understand how 'being still' will help men to know? Surely we can. Take a simple illustration from Nature. If we would learn anything about wild Nature and her ways, naturalists tell us we must master the art of quietness. Let a man go tramping through a forest, and all the wild things of the forest will go scurrying away from his path, and will hide themselves until the noise of his tramping has passed. As far as a revelation of its life is concerned the forest will present to the noisy visitor an absolutely blank page. But let a man enter the solemn woods and sit down there in perfect quietness. Little by little the wild things lose their fear and come out, and the forest begins to reveal to him the wonderful secrets it hides. 'Be still and know.' And that is one way to the knowledge of God—*Be still.* We want the quiet and receptive mind. And, perhaps, there is no lesson we more urgently need to learn in these restless days of ours. In the multiplicity of our activities we are losing our 'quiet times,' and as a result we are losing our grip of God. We need to recover our lost times of quiet. Amid the thousand and one cares and distractions of the world, in the stunning tide of its life, God has no chance with us—for His voice is a still, small voice. But when we shut the world out,

and with undistracted mind wait upon God, the sense of God will steal upon us, and revelations of God will be given us. 'Enter into thine inner chamber,' said Jesus, 'and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father which seeth in secret.' What do the inner chamber and the shut door represent but Christ's insistence upon quietness? God may not reveal Himself in startling visions as He did to George Fox, but we know, if we are familiar with the inner chamber and the shut door we shall be in no doubt about God.

Let us, then, labour for an inward stillness,—
An inward stillness and an inward healing;
That perfect silence where the lips and heart
Are still, and we no longer entertain
Our own imperfect thoughts and vain opinions,
But God alone speaks in us, and we wait
In singleness of heart, that we may know
His will, and in the silence of our spirits,
That we may do His will, and do that only![1]

(2) Here is a sentence from the lips of our Lord, which suggests another gateway to this vital knowledge. 'He that doeth the will shall know of the teaching.' *He that doeth the will shall know!* Perhaps this strikes some of us as a case of putting the cart before the horse. Knowing, we say, usually comes before doing, not doing before knowing. You must know first before you can do. Not always; *doing* is often a gateway to *knowing*. As a matter of fact, that is how most of our great advances in mechanics and, let us say, surgery, have been made—not by knowing before doing, but by doing before knowing. If we could have watched Edison in his laboratory we should have found him busy experimenting. He had a certain aim before him—say the preservation and reproduction of the tones of the human voice. He did not know how it was going to be done—but he made experiments, first in this way, then in that, and at last the discovery was made and the phonograph was produced. Edison did not know before he tried, he tried until he knew. And similarly, doing is one of the methods of knowing in the spiritual realm. Obedience is a gateway to knowledge. There is indeed no possibility of knowing God in any real, direct, and vital way, except by doing His will. Of course, we may know about Him, we may be quite well acquainted with what other people say of Him, without doing His will. There are whole books written on the character and attributes of God, and we could read and study them, but that is not the knowledge of God which is eternal life. We must know Him for ourselves. We must know Him to be the kind of God Jesus says He is. For instance, God is revealed to us in the Bible as One who, in His love for men, gave His only Son to die for them; whose love reaches down to the humblest and most abject; whose power is such that He can save to the uttermost those who come to Him through Christ. Now, there is really only one way of *knowing*, of being absolutely sure that God is all this and that is by doing His will, obeying His call, confiding in Him. Every act of loyalty and allegiance finds its reward in enlarged understanding.

¶ 'The loudest and the clearest thing God ever said to me was said in the slums of a great city, and took the form of an insistent call that I should find a way of doing something to remove that blot upon the dignity of man and that insult to God.' That is what one man has to say about the way in which God came into his life, and he goes on to say that ever since, when he has been trying to serve in any way, he has been sure that he was in the fellowship of God.

(3) And here is a sentence from the Apostle John that suggests another way through which we may enter upon this vital knowledge. 'Every one that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God.' *Everyone that loveth, knoweth!* This again, controverts a popular belief. People say, 'love is blind,' but this is a great mistake. Love is vision and understanding. Unless a man loves—the door to any and every branch of knowledge is closed against him. You will never make a musician out of a boy who has no liking for music, or an artist out of one who has no taste for art, or a scholar out of a boy who has no aptitude for books. Love is the key that opens the doors to every branch of knowledge. And still more is this the case when we deal, not with things, but with persons. Sympathy is a condition of understanding. John was more completely in sympathy with his Master than any one of the Twelve, with the result that he knew his Lord as not one of the others knew Him. 'He that loveth . . . knoweth.' And love is the key to the knowledge of God.

[1] Longfellow, *John Endicott.*

¶ 'I don't think that any other experience ever so finally and irresistibly taught me that God is there, and is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things, as the experience of love which seemed too great for one's own heart to bear and which asked only to bless and fortify the ones loved. To me that is the proof. It is like a key. With that in the heart all sorts of things are explained.' [1]

Those who, by being much with Jesus, have first come to understand what love really is, and have then taken it in that God is love have found the simplest and yet the most certain way of approach to Him. They do literally find God as soon as they learn what love is. And they also find that strange thing called salvation. For from thenceforth the love of God constrains them, and they live a new life—a liberated and selfless life—because there is nothing else possible when we know His love.

¶ One of the most weighty of all Robert Browning's poems is that which tells the imaginary story of how a certain Arab physician, wandering in the East, came upon Lazarus, whom Christ had raised from the dead, still living. Of course, the Arab physician was much interested in this curious state of things, and he regarded it as a very interesting biological or theological study. The strange thing about this man was the things that affected him and the things that did not. Many things that we might have considered great were to him nothing, and things that we should, perhaps, consider very little were to him of tremendous significance. The physician notices him watching the little children at their games, and suddenly one of these little children loses his temper, and this man's eyes begin to open and a sort of horror lurks in them. He has seen sin. Yet a little child might die, and pass into the presence of his Father, and his eyes would light with joy and love and satisfaction for him; but sin—that is an awful thing. They told him that Rome was on the march, to blot out, to stamp out like a little spark, 'Thy town, thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once,' but it produced no impression upon him at all. Mere changes of Empires or dynasties, what were they to the great reality of faith in God? A man's devotion to truth and righteousness—ah, these were the great things! 'His heart and brain moved there, his feet stood here,' said the physician. He was a man who had seen God, and had come back into this life with new ideas of the presence of God. He knew what life really is.

[1] A. H. Gray, *Finding God*, 102.

The Scene and Test of Our Lord's Ministry

John xvii. 4, 10.—'I have glorified thee on the earth. . . . I am glorified in them.'

These verses set before us the scene of our Lord's ministry and the test of its success and its crown. The two aspects are, indeed, complementary. The saying, 'I am glorified in them' balances and completes the earlier saying, 'I have glorified thee on the earth.' Thus we may well try to think of them together, and so gain a wider view of the whole truth which they express.

Each points to a surpassingly wonderful contrast. First there is the contrast between the perfect Life, which has formed the example and standard for every later age, and the hard and humble surroundings in which it was passed. Then there is the contrast between Jesus and His companions—between His entire self-devotion, His limitless love, His unfailing faith in God and their readiness to halt and grow weary even when they had set out upon the upward path. Yet, in spite of all, He identifies Himself with them. He accepts their efforts and their progress, slow and hesitating though it has been, as the vindication of His ministry and the proof that His mission on the earth has not failed.

1. *The Contrast between the Perfect Life and its Surroundings.*—'I have glorified thee *on the earth*.' To say that our Lord's life and death took place on the earth which we know, in this solid, every-day, uninspiring world in which our lives are passed, may seem a statement too obvious to make, still more to repeat and emphasize. But can we claim to have realized it in all its meaning and fullness? Do we not often look at the gospel story through a kind of golden haze of unworldly beauty which has gathered round it since we first heard it told far back in childhood? And, if so, do we not in some degree carry the thought of Jesus' life away from the hard realities of earth to a

dimly conceived dream-country of the religious imagination? But we cannot do this without missing a great part of the lesson which we are meant to draw from the records of that life which have come down to us.

(1) Palestine is a real country. As Dr Rainy once said in pointing out what the Promised Land had meant to the Children of Israel: 'A land was given—an actual land, with hills and valleys, corn and wine—with practical qualities, such as farmers could take account of; but it was a land provided by God—a land in which God should dwell with them, a land in which He should carry on His dealings with them as one who gives His people inheritance.' And still the same two aspects strike the traveller passing through that little country. It is a land of grim, hard realities, where the sternness of Nature is often more apparent than her poetry; yet it is 'the Holy Land,' separated from other lands as the Jews were separated from other peoples, by events and by the exercise of spiritual forces such as no other land has known.

(2) Let us remember, too, the years that passed before Jesus entered on His public ministry, before His frequent journeys began, or the crowds pressed round to hear and be healed. We know that these years, dismissed in a scattered sentence or two in the Gospels, were passed in Nazareth in the home and the carpenter's workshop. In no other life-story is there so startling a contrast between the infinite significance of the mission and the quietness and obscurity of the long years in which the workman was preparing himself and his tools for his future task.

In the village life of those days great variety could hardly have been looked for, and houses were barely furnished. Simple things for use in the home or the mill or the field, made according to patterns handed down from past generations—the making of these occupied for many years the hands that were later stretched forth in healing, and at the last stretched out upon the Cross. So little opportunity for wide thought or study did His life in Nazareth afford that, when in the course of His ministry Jesus 'came into his own country,' the incredulous question at once rose to men's lips: 'What is the wisdom that is given unto this man, and what mean such mighty works wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter?'

(3) Again, we remember how much of His time and strength was given during our Lord's short ministry, to the work of healing the sick. If His journeys wearied His bodily frame, His work as a Healer of men must have thrown a heavy strain upon both body and spirit. The older view of our Lord, emphasizing almost exclusively the power of His Divine nature, took little account of this; but stress is now rightly laid on the fact that this power was at all times exercised through the human nature which He shared with us. Consider the surroundings of His ministry. The towns in which 'most of his mighty works were done' were all beside the Sea of Galilee, in that deep valley hundreds of feet below sea-level, and in a climate hardly less enervating than that of Jericho itself. No European can safely spend the summer there even to-day; and at that time, the crowded lanes of Capernaum—even more breathless and sweltering than those of other Eastern towns—and the pressure of the crowds surging around might well have exhausted the strength even of one who failed to enter into the sorrows of those around him as Jesus did.

¶ Although Dr Torrance had been told of the enervating climate, he had not paid much attention to the matter. Like most readers of the New Testament, he had little idea of the physical character of the home country of Jesus. 'Strange,' he said once, 'that no mention is made in the Gospels of the great heat in which Christ carried on His work.' Now the knowledge came to him with the shock of an unpleasant surprise.[1]

But the burden rested heavily upon Jesus just because His sympathy was so swift and so complete. In the Gospels we do not see a Divinely commissioned wonder-worker, exercising His miraculous power as if it were some external instrument placed in His hands for the relief of distress. Rather we see One who in healing others gave Himself.

(4) But no great man ever finds his hardest trials in the outward, material sphere. Weariness and monotony are grievous things, but how little they weigh in the balance if sympathy, gratitude and appreciation come to meet them. If these latter are absent, how infinitely heavier the outward burdens of life 'on the earth' become. Let us remember how slowly and imperfectly even His immediate followers responded to His teaching and grasped His idea

[1] W. P. Livingstone, *A Galilee Doctor*, 72.

of His mission; how His family sought to place hindrances in His path, and His fellow-townsfolk were the last instead of the first to accept Him; and how the spiritual guides of His people first suspected and then bitterly opposed and persecuted Him—and we shall in some measure come to realize the extent to which our Lord entered into this supreme bitterness of the life of many of earth's greatest men. Yet He went on His way, unshaken even though alone.

¶ It was those nearest Muhammad who were his first followers. But there was no one from Nazareth among the disciples of Jesus. And think of the coldness and aloofness of His own family. So far were His brethren from understanding the passion which consumed Him that, on one occasion, 'they went out to lay hold on him, for they said, He is beside himself.' When He uttered the sad prophecy, 'A man's foes shall be they of his own household,' was He speaking out of the fullness of His own pained heart?

The judgment of the centuries is no other than this—that in no other character in history has the ideal for mankind been so clearly shown or the Divine Purpose so completely set forth. As the end drew near, Jesus had the right to say, 'I have glorified thee on the earth.'

2. *The Contrast between Jesus and His Companions.*—'I am glorified in them.' What can these amazing words mean if not this, that He, to whom His disciples owed all that they were and all the brightness of hope that shone around their lives, was content to accept as the reward of His work even a glimmering of light reflected from those who at the first had borrowed all from Him?

It is a contrast which cannot be overstated. On the one hand we see the moral majesty and steadfastness of One who is sure alike of His mission and of the Father who sustains Him through it; on the other, the weak and fluctuating faith of those who only catch occasional glimpses of the truths by which their Master lives. Their faith and hope ebb and flow, and then fall back again; and their efforts to live according to the law of the Kingdom as Jesus proclaimed it are as intermittent as their understanding of the nature of the Kingdom. Simon Peter, their leader, is the true type of all, in his impetuous bursts of devotion and his swift flashes of insight, followed but too rapidly by relapses into moral cowardice and the commonplace religious thinking of his day. The level of spiritual attainment which these men had reached would seem the very reverse of a vindication of their Master's ministry. Yet He accepts their service and their devotion as honouring both His mission and Himself.

What is the explanation of a judgment which seems so strangely, so unaccountably, generous?

(1) We see in Jesus the insight of the true teacher, whose vision pierces beyond the failures visible to the casual gaze to that promise of high attainment which still remains hidden from the ordinary view. It is only the hurried, impatient beginner who despises the day of small things; the wise observer, the inspiring teacher, looks forward, and is content to wait, for in the smallest and crudest beginnings he can detect the promise of a great result. The most hopeful and the most patient teacher is also the greatest.

¶ Jesus' attitude toward human personality can be briefly described as always seeing people in terms of their possibilities. He habitually looked at men in terms of what they might become. We often do that with children, but the marvel of the Master was that He did it with most unlikely people. He saw prodigals in far countries and women taken in adultery, and thought of them in terms of their moral possibilities. A disciple might cry, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord,' but Jesus answered, 'Come ye after me, and I will *make you* fishers of men.'[1]

(2) We cannot over-estimate the distance that separated Jesus from those who had been His closest companions. Yet it is possible, in describing the shortcomings and failures of the Eleven, to forget the reality of the sacrifice which they had made and of the devotion which they had shown. In spite of all the ways in which they had fallen short, it remains true that they had done a great thing—*the* great thing. They had 'left all.' They had ventured all on the truth of Jesus' claims, in reliance on His character and promise alone. For some, this had involved the break-up of their homes; for all, the forfeiting of a regular livelihood, and the following, through poverty and hardship, of a path whose end they could not see. In many respects they understood imperfectly; *but they followed.*

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Adventurous Religion*, 34.

(3) Yet, when all has been said, we feel that the magnanimity of Christ's judgment remains unexplained. It shows a generosity beyond the deserving of His disciples in any age. He trusted His work to men and women like these early followers, and like us to-day; but more than this—men judge Him by what they see and know of us. The ordinary man will always judge more readily from the living evidence of his own day, from the people whom he knows and whose worth he can estimate, than from a story written in a book many centuries old; and thus the honour or dishonour in which Jesus Christ is held depends more on the lives of those who profess to follow Him than even upon the records of His life in the Gospels.

¶ A missionary was preaching in the vernacular to a crowd of villagers in India. He was describing in simple and beautiful language the life and character of our Lord, dwelling on His love and tender compassion for suffering humanity. Among his listeners was a man who said: 'We know Him; He lives at Trinity College. When I went there to have my eyes healed, and the rain poured down, He took off His European coat and made me put it on and go home warm and glad.' And the others all chimed in: 'It is true, we too saw Him there.' They were thinking of that saintly character, Norman P. Campbell, of Trinity College, Kandy, whose beautiful life was spent in healing the sick and teaching all who knew him about the Saviour and Master in whose steps he daily walked. He died in 1917.[1]

A Full-Orbed Gospel

John xvii. 9.—'I pray for them: I pray not for the world.'

However much men have differed in their thought of Jesus, one conviction has never been absent from the minds of His followers—that He is the rightful King of the world. His Church has always proclaimed His sovereignty. Even when men have differed concerning the mystery of His person, they have laboured in the faith that He must reign. To establish His rule has been at all times the declared objective of His Church. Perhaps the real core of the difficulty has been that His followers have never been agreed as to what they meant by 'the world,' hence they could not agree upon the manner of His rule over it.

There are plainly discernible in Christian history three distinct ideas concerning the world. They are mutually exclusive. As they have differed, so the related ideas of the kingship of Christ have been bound to differ. According to each of them these striking words in the great prayer of the Master would have a varying significance—'I pray for them: I pray not for the world.'

1. *The Gospel of the Other World.*—There have been those to whom 'the world' meant something that was incurably evil. Its ultimate doom was destruction. The Christ had come to redeem His people from it. They who received Him as their Saviour became immediately pilgrims to a better country and passed through the world as strangers who had no abiding city. The Kingdom of God was otherwhere. The Church was a colony of heaven, located in the world but with all its loyalties centred in a realm beyond its borders. Empires, political systems, and social adjustments were no concern of the followers of Christ. They represented an alien rule to be submitted to for the good of the soul, and sometimes to be resisted, until the redeemed should enter upon their promised inheritance. The Church consisted of refugees, who, however, were not pitifully seeking concealment, but were proudly, defiantly, daringly marching through a hostile territory to a better land.

¶ The old legend of St Benedict is symbolic of this attitude to the world. One night, just before the evening hymn, as Benedict was gazing from the window of his cell, he saw in a vision the whole world with all its glory, gathered up, as it were, into a single ray of dazzling light. 'He looked on it,' we are told, 'and he looked down on it—*inspexit et despexit.*'

This conception of 'the world' necessarily affected the idea in believing hearts of the Kingship of Christ. It offered a key for the interpretation of His priestly prayer—'I pray for them; I pray not for the world.' Its efficacy was for the 'gold, silver and precious stones'; the 'wood, hay and stubble' were destined for the burning. It was the gospel of the other world.

[1] J. W. W. Moeran.

2. *The Gospel of the World.*—In our day the Church has moved away from this conception of the world. She has another idea of her function. She holds herself to be the central fighting force around which the Kingdom of God on earth will eventually consolidate. The world to her is not a hopeless wreck, drifting to doom, but the creation of God, essentially beautiful and good, though defaced and dishonoured by the sin of man. This altered thought about the world involves a new conception of the kingship of Christ. A new social conscience has emerged and is actively functioning. The Church's sphere of activity has been immeasurably widened so far as this world is concerned, though her vision of the world beyond has been fore-shortened. The Church is anxious to show that she has both a message and a dynamic for the enrichment of life. Her gospel is no longer an appeal to the soul to enter into an ark of refuge, but to go out and contend with the world's evil.

Even in her missionary enterprise her claim on behalf of Christ is that He can give a fuller life to the nations than they have known without Him. Missionaries are no longer mere preachers, but masters of the healing art, directors of education, organizers of technical efficiency, correctors of social abuses, and advisers in political relationships. The non-Christian peoples are not regarded as doomed souls, tottering over into the abyss for lack of power to turn a saving look upon Christ, but nations who need instruction in all the manifold ways of Christendom.

The gospel of to-day is the gospel of the world. When we think of the Master's words, 'I pray for them: I pray not for the world,' we hope for the vitalizing of the Church that, like a radio-active centre, she may send her saving health out to the edges and into the heart of the entire world. No one seems to notice that we have almost entirely sacrificed the interest of the world beyond. In our anxiety to do the right thing on earth we have lost our hold upon the eternal. We have become one among the many 'uplift' societies now so active in the world. No one would wish to complain of these things. The question is, Is there not still something better of which the gospel possesses the key?

¶ The characteristic Christian hope is largely thrust into the background to-day, and Addison's famous saying is being verified: 'We make provisions for this life as if it were never to have an end, and for the other as if it were never to have a beginning.'

3. *The Gospel of the Larger World.*—It is a fact of history that Christianity began in the world because of a quickened belief in the immortality of the soul. That belief was reinforced by the assurance that Christ had risen from the dead. It carried with it, to believing men, the conviction that they also were the heirs of an everlasting destiny. That in its turn altered their sense of values. Worldly blessings were still precious, but not final. Money was useful, but not of paramount importance. God was doing more with a man than meeting his creature-needs from the cradle to the grave. The man was destined to everlasting fellowship with his Creator-Father, who has set him in the mundane school to receive the rudiments of his limitless education.

We need nothing half so much as the revitalizing of our faith in the eternal significance of the soul. The best contributions of the Church arise from this root. He is blind who does not see that the world will take much from the Church and still reject her essential message. The Church was the pioneer in education, the founder of hospitals, the authoress of the drama, the guardian of the weekly day of rest, the forcing-house of social reform, the exponent of the rights of women, the sanctifier of the marriage covenant, the protector of children, the first crusader for temperance, the founder of the Red Cross movement, as she is now the vital centre of the battle for world-peace. All these things the world takes from her and forgets whence they were derived. And all these things tend to be devoted to material uses, to the comfort of man rather than to his supreme end, which is 'to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever.' The Church must press on, leaving to the world her successive victories, because she has new ones in view. They all spring from the same root, having this distinguishing mark, that they arise from her deep sense of the value of the human soul.

Give us but the revitalized faith in the immortality of every man and we shall take the betterment of his industrial condition in our stride. The exclusive gospel of the 'other world' is futility. The gospel of the merely

mundane is sterility. The gospel of the larger world—of the one world, with a terrestrial phase and an everlasting advancement—is the gospel of Christ. We need it, not in its phases, but in its completeness. The Church is its guardian. This is her function, whether at home or in foreign fields. Let her gather together in every land folk who regard terrestrial life as the porch of the eternal, who seek the welfare of man because it is part of the glory of God. For them the great prayer goes ringing through the ages. 'I pray for them: I pray not for the world.' Let *them* be His—and the world will come their way.

The Power of Intercession

John xvii. 9.—'I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.'

In this chapter we have the only prolonged prayer of Jesus given in the Gospels. Fragments of prayer have been preserved which burst from His soul in hours of unusual emotion, but nowhere else are we allowed to listen while our Lord pours out His full heart to His Father. He brings Himself and His disciples and all who are to be won for Him throughout the ages to the mercy seat. It is the beginning of the heavenly intercession; it belongs, as it were, to the two lives and the two worlds—'the days of his flesh' and the years of His glory—earth and heaven.

¶ Melanchthon, in his last lecture shortly before his death, said: 'There is no voice which has ever been heard, either in heaven or in earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more sublime, than this prayer offered up by the Son of God Himself.'

1. In these intercessions of our Lord for the groups of those whom He calls His friends four points seem to stand out. First, those for whom He prays are God's gifts to Himself. They are 'the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were and thou gavest them me.' They were God's before they were His; they were God's still while they were His. Secondly, He lets His mind dwell upon all that they have been to Himself. He puts out of sight for the moment all their weakness and all their failures. He puts out of sight the fact that He has needed this very night to wash the feet of all of them, that they have shown slowness to understand His teaching, and that before the next morning they will have deserted Him and fled. While He prays He will dwell only on the good. 'They have kept thy word.' And, thirdly, He sees the actual dangers that beset them. He foresees that they will be in the world, that they will be hated by the world, that they will be tempted to sin; but He does not pray that they may be taken out of the world, or that they may not be exposed to hatred and temptation. The prayers are only for spiritual blessings—that they may be drawn into closer unity, that they may be sanctified in the truth, that the true Christian joy and Christian love may be fulfilled in them. And then, lastly, He leaves those for whom He has prayed absolutely and with all confidence in His Father's hands. In the Father's keeping they will be sanctified in the truth, and others will believe through their preaching. They will ultimately be with Him and behold His glory. And at the last He no longer asks the Father for that, but He wills it through His union with the Father. 'I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am.' They may desert Him that very night, they may deny Him the next morning, the trusted three may not be able to watch with Him one hour, but yet there is a quiet confidence that He will win through to the end. He has no anxious thought for the morrow—no anxious thought at all.

2. Now, who are they whom God has given us? They fall into two classes. In the first place there are those whose relation to us comes from no choice whatever of our own, but from what we call the accident of our birth and circumstances, but whom we very wisely think of as the gifts of God to us. Such are our parents, our brothers and sisters, our children. But, further, there are those also whom we have chosen for ourselves, and this was the case with those apostles for whom our Lord was praying that night. They had not chosen Him, but He had chosen them. But they were none the less in His eyes gifts from the Father. No one, He knew, could come unto Him except the Father drew him, and the Father had drawn the disciples by the cords of love, and had given them to Him, not as mere neighbours, the friends of His growing years, but as the objects

of His love, as those who had made response to His love. And so for ourselves there are the objects of our own free choice—the wife, the husband, the friend.

Shall I not pray for you, since you have been
God's gift to me?
A strong, true friend in all my need,
A gift of glad security
Sent by His love indeed.

Such, then, must be, as it was with our Lord, the starting-point of our intercession. We are praying for those who are gifts to us, gifts whom we value for the Giver's sake as well as for their own, gifts for the use of which we are responsible, which we shall have hereafter to give back to the Giver, not tarnished but made more beautiful for the use that we have had of them. In a fine phrase of George MacDonald's, 'we have, when we pray, to think of others and of God together.'

For this we shall need to imitate our Lord and dwell upon all that they have been to us in the past, to requicken every memory of past tenderness and kindness. This is why true intercession is so valuable. Amid the petty jars and annoyances of daily life, amid those small frictions which arise within the circle of love and friendship, little things sometimes seem so great. The hasty word leaves its scar; the unjust taunt has its sting, and the poison from the sting upsets the whole current of our blood. But intercession soon restores the true proportion, and the mole-hill is seen once more to be a mole-hill, and to be as nothing compared with the high ranges of past acts of love and thoughtfulness which lie further off on the horizon.

So with our hearts full of gratitude to God for what those have been to us in the past, we shall picture to ourselves the dangers that assail them, and then try to frame our prayers in the way that our Master would have us do, reminding ourselves that intercession is not only to help the weak to be strong, but the strong to be kept strong; not only to help the bad to be good, but the good to be better. And we must see to it that the deepest and strongest prayer shall be not for their physical but for their spiritual welfare.

When we have tried to carry out any inspiration that has come to us in the moment of prayer, we shall leave those whom we love with confidence in the Father's keeping. We shall rest securely, like our Lord, on His love as Father, on His character as righteous Father, as holy Father; and we shall go on with our tasks without fretting, without restlessness, without anxiety. For surely that is the comfort of intercession to a father. It is casting a burden which we cannot bear upon shoulders that can bear it, upon a heart that loves to bear it. If in everything we really have made known our requests unto God with prayer and thanksgiving, then we have the promise that the peace of God shall guard our hearts and minds. For if we have once come really to think of those whom we love as God's gifts to us, then even if they are taken from us we shall believe that the Lord who has taken them away is the Lord who gave them, and we shall be able to say, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord.'

The Lord gave:—
O grace, transcending grace,
That gave a gift so fair—
Heaven's gift to Life's embrace,
An Angel to its care.
The Lord gave.

The Lord hath taken away:—
O Loss that filleth Time!
O Loss that crowdeth Space!
Love's Calvary I climb
With blood on hands and face.
The Lord hath taken away.

Blessed be the Name of the Lord:—
He gives, as God alone,
As God alone, He takes—
I've never lost my Own,
She never me forsakes.
Blessed be the Name of the Lord.[1]

3. But the example of our Lord carries with it a still further lesson. It reminds us that the prevailing power of intercession will depend upon the character of our own lives, our own efforts to do the Father's will. Before He prays for others on that night our Lord is able to appeal to His own life. 'I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.' 'I kept them in thy name.' But even that is not all. His intercession commits Him to a further effort

[1] W. E., in *The British Weekly*, 30th August 1928.

still to do God's will. There is a new act of self-sacrifice to be faced. Once more He has to say, 'Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.'

So if we would hope that our prayers may help our friends, let us look into our own lives, let us be grateful for the grace of God wherever and whenever it has helped us to do the work which He gave us to do. And let us not slacken our efforts, but again and again consecrate our lives to God's service. Let us bring into our own lives the courage, the self-control, the absence of bitterness, the sense of the reality of God's presence in life and in death which we have asked for our friends.

¶ It is recorded of Charles Simeon that he said, 'I find that an exceedingly close walk with God is necessary for the maintaining of fervour in intercession. Sometimes an extraordinary sense of want may beget fervour in our petitions for ourselves, or a familiar mercy enliven our graceful acknowledgments. But it is scarcely ever that we can intercede with fervour unless we enjoy habitual nearness to God.' And in a similar way a later Cambridge saint has said: 'We have not really learned to love until we are living the highest possible life in order that the object of our love may become a saint.'

On the other hand, there is surely very real encouragement to us in the thought that every time we do try to intercede for others reacts upon our life and helps it. 'When our intercession,' said William Law, 'is made an exercise of love and care for those among whom our lot has fallen, or who belong to us in a nearer relation, it often becomes of the greatest benefit to ourselves, and produces the best effects on our own hearts. We are stirred to fresh acts of kindness, our eyes are more and more opened to see the goodness and the lovableness of those around us, and it has been truly said, every man feels that his soul's inner growth is shown by a keener appreciation of the unnoticed goodness that lies around us on every side.'

4. When the Evangelist recorded this Intercessory prayer it was years after the Lord had uttered it. It was to him the record of a prayer that had been answered again and again in the history of the Christian Church. He knew how the apostles and their converts had been sanctified in the truth, how God's love had been perfected in them, and how they had had spiritual fellowship one with another. Now the measure of their joy had been fulfilled. He was recording a prayer of One whom he knew still to be an advocate with the Father, One to whom Christians could pray both for themselves and for their brethren, knowing that they would have the petition they desired.

And still the Advocate is there. Still He pleads for us and for those whom we love. Let us, then, take pains that our prayers may be modelled on His great Intercession, that they may be framed in His spirit, that they may be offered in His Name, and then we may be sure that they will find their way into the presence of God and that He, our Advocate, who stands there, will purify them from anything that is selfish or unworthy in them, and present them to the Father for His blessing.

How shall we pray Thee,
O Lord of our life,
For those that are dearer to us than our life?

How but by laying their souls in Thy hand,
As a child his most treasured possession
In the hands of his mother, to show her his love?

Thus we bring Thee to-day these souls that we love,
And we render them gladly to Thee,
The best gift that we have;

And we pray Thee the while, with the trust of a child,
Take them and hold them Thyself,
Keeping them ever next to Thy heart.[1]

Unworldliness

John xvii. 15.—'I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.'

It is the presence of the Great Deliverer, and not the absence of the foe, which will secure the Christian's triumph. Many of the influences that play upon him may be fraught with deadliest peril, but the most perilous situation is, after all, the richest of opportunities. All apparently might be saints if taken out of the reach of temptation; but none could ever be sure of his own sainthood, or ever afford help to a man or woman in the throes of conflict. The disciples of Jesus are to be pioneers in a

[1] J. S. Hoyland.

mighty enterprise whose ultimate purpose is to subdue to Himself all the peoples of the earth. Around them is to grow up a society in which His ideals shall be cherished, and the mind that was in Him cultivated. And such results can never be if these disciples are other than 'men in a world of men.' Human society, with all its possibilities of good and of evil, is the condition of their service; it is the condition of their growth. Hence their Master's words: 'I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.'

1. Now what is this world, this ever-present worldliness, that the Master warns His disciples against? We shall never know its significance by dwelling merely in the realm of external conduct, and classifying acts in the two categories of good and bad, worldly and unworldly. Worldliness is never to be known from the careful memorising of a catalogue of things to be avoided, and things to be esteemed. It is a spirit, a temperament, an attitude of soul. It is life without high callings, devoid of lofty ideals. Its motto is 'forward,' never 'upward.' Its goal is success, not holiness. It is destitute of reverence, and never bows in rapt and silent wonder in the secret place. God is not denied; He is forgotten and ignored. Such is the world—the subtle presence of the non-spiritual. Worldliness, where it really exists, is the sin of all sins, since it is a tacit denial of everything that religion affirms. It is the really dangerous kind of atheism.

¶ In the biography of Dr Dale his son tells of the discovery, after his father's death, of an unfinished sermon with its last sentence broken off in the middle: 'Unworldliness does not consist in the most rigid and conscientious observance of any external rules of conduct, but in the spirit and temper, and in the habit of living created by the vision of God, by constant fellowship with Him, by a personal and vivid experience of the greatness of the Christian redemption, by the settled purpose to do the will of God always, in all things, at all costs, and by the power of the great hope, the full assurance, that after our mortal years are spent, there is a larger, fuller, richer life in . . .'

2. Jesus did *not* pray that His disciples should be taken out of the world. That would have been a vain petition, for to take a man out of the world could not make him unworldly. The caged tiger, dashing himself against the bars of his prison, is the same fierce animal he always was; he is cut off from opportunities of mischief, that is all, but his character is unchanged. It is clearly not our Lord's desire that those who are in His service should lead lives cloistered and remote from the world. Yet it was the Church's ideal for many a day, and in various directions that obsolete experiment is colouring our thinking still. But it is altogether too simple a prescription. It attempts to solve the problem by ignoring it. Monasticism has produced its great saints; but it has produced more abundantly its narrow-minded, unsympathetic persecutors and its unscrupulous political intriguers. Worst of all, it has given false testimony to men concerning the true sphere for the exercise of religion. When a Frenchman speaks of a person having taken to 'the religious life,' he means the life of a monk or a nun. The common life of the honest God-fearing man is thus stamped as secular and of inferior worth.

It is the mind that was in Christ that we want to have and need to have also in us. And His was not the fanaticism of the ascetic, or the devout dreaming of the convent; His was the life which moved in cities, and collected around it the countryman, the fisherman, the labourer, the publican, the sick, the hungry, all shades and classes of mankind; in active giving and receiving, in vivid sympathy with the domestic, social, and universal life of men. And that is the life of those who desire to follow Christ. He will be nearest to us when we are doing our daily work most vigorously in the midst of the world.

¶ Asceticism has no place in the gospel at all; what is asked is that we should struggle against mammon, against care, against selfishness; what it demands and disengages is love, the love that serves and is self-sacrificing. This struggle and love are the kind of asceticism which the gospel means, and whoever encumbers Jesus' message with any other kind fails to understand its grandeur and importance.[1]

¶ The Sadhu has been asked what he thinks about men who leave the world and live alone in prayer and meditation, seeking to save their own souls, rather than being on active

[1] Harnack,

service in the world for their fellow-men. This is what he says: 'During the few years of this life only I am given the privilege to serve man and Christ. If it were right for me to be in Heaven always I should have been called there, but as I am still left on earth it is my duty to work. The world is all the property of my Father, and is, therefore, my property. If I give up the world, I give up some of the gifts which my heavenly Father gives me out of His Love. Therefore, I do not give up the world, but only the evil in it.'[1]

It is Christ Himself who has taught us that the big, busy world, with its strange mixture of good and evil, is God's. And to cower away from that, in fear of what it will do to our souls, to live 'in some parlour with a regulated temperature,' letting the world go its own way, if only we are safe, is not Christian living in Christ's sense of the words. The world is full of struggle and temptation, but it is not Christ's will for us that we should either shirk or flee that risky arena.

It would be useless, in any case, if we did, for it would overlook this cardinal principle, that the seat of evil is not in things but in men, not in acts but in the spirit that underlies them. Acts apparently the most sacred may be vitiated by utter worldliness. The Pharisee prays that he may be seen of men; his is the temper of the ambitious worldling and nothing else. Association with our fellows even for the highest ends is not in itself the conquest of worldliness! If the man in the pulpit cares primarily for his own reputation, and overlooks the high responsibility of the care of souls, is there no worldliness there? If personal jealousies part workers in a church from sympathy with one another, is there no worldliness there? In the home life do we not often sacrifice the great social interests and establish selfishness within our family? And are there not joys so absorbing that they fill too big a place in our lives and shut out the vision of God. It is in the set of the affections, in the bent of the will, that the real worth of the character lies. No prayer goes deeper than that of Frances Ridley Havergal:

> Take my will, and make it Thine;
> It shall be no longer mine.
> Take my heart—it is Thine own:
> It shall be Thy royal throne.

[1] E. Sanders and E. Judah, *Sundar Singh*, 59.

3. It is, then, the world-spirit, and not mere things or acts, against which we must guard. The Christian will abstain from many a deed and many a form of activity that the man of the world engages in without scruple; but he will do so for the deep reason that he finds it inconsistent with his truest life, and he has learned to put God first. If a man love God, he will shrink from all that clashes with that supreme affection. For the citizen of the kingdom of heaven, the final test of value, as it was of his Lord, will be what will please the Father. That is the royal standard He brought in to determine the worth and quality of everything. Concerning everything, this was the first and final test: 'How does this look in the light of His countenance?' Individual life was brought to this judgment, also the social life, and the national life; everything was regarded from the standpoint of its revealing rays. And what the light revealed determined our Lord's obedience. Such is the primary element in unworldliness, a certain attitude of the soul, setting God before it, accepting the judgment of God, and fearlessly carrying it out in the practical life.

What Christian unworldliness should be is best of all understood by recalling the example of our Master. In Him we see no frowning narrowness that ignores the joy of life. None entered into the gladness of living more fully than Jesus, who graced with His presence a marriage-feast, and associated so freely with His fellow-men, even in their social enjoyment, that His critics exclaimed: 'He eats and drinks with publicans and sinners.' Unworldliness does not blow out the light of merriment, or damp down the fires of geniality. The lilies of the field, the wheat mingled with the tares, the sheep wandering over the mountains, the merchant seeking rare stones, the woman at her kneading-trough or sweeping the house in search of her lost coin—He views all with the eyes of sympathy, and everywhere finds some new message of the goodness and love of the Father. Jesus was so God-conscious that He could live in the midst of the world and use it, His whole nature vibrating to the Divine music that was about Him continually. To be attuned to God as He was—that is the secret of true unworldliness.

¶ Alexander Knox dwells in one place on what he calls the 'gaiety' of John Wesley.

At first sight one is somewhat startled at such a word as 'gaiety' being applied to the great awakening preacher. And yet a new and an unusual word is very useful sometimes, if only in order to exhibit another side of some man's character than that side which we usually see. 'I will acknowledge,' says Knox, 'that nothing but the clearest evidence of deep piety could have made this gaiety of Wesley's suitable. But I must also think that as it was in him nothing but such piety could have produced it. Wesley's gaiety was what could only be seen in one who felt his religion to rest upon the whole nature and fitness of things, and felt himself at rest in his religion.' [1]

Sanctification for the Service of Others

John xvii. 19.—'And for their sakes I sanctify myself.'

1. Our Lord had lived all His days in conscious obedience to His Father's will, and that obedience had brought Him face to face with death. And now He is called upon to decide whether He will be obedient unto a sure death, and these words record both His decision and the motive which lay behind it. 'I sanctify,' or consecrate, 'myself.' That is the decision. And in this full, undimmed self-revelation we are permitted to know the motive which swayed His heart at this hour of crisis. 'For their sakes I sanctify myself.' For whose sake? What a wealth of love and concern are marked by those words! They must refer, of course, particularly to the small intimate band of disciples who are round about Him at this moment. But these few disciples represent the world to the eyes of Christ. It was not for their sakes alone that He sanctified Himself. He was thinking of them, but through them He was thinking of the world. They were to be His voice, His hands, His feet, to take His message far and wide, and 'for their sake' meant the sakes of all those who should be touched by their ministries.

¶ 'For their sakes': that is a motto with its eyes looking outward, looking outward as far as the distant rim of the earth. It is the fitting motto of a life dedicated wholly to the service of the world. 'I sanctify myself': that is a motto with its eyes turned inward, the fitting resolve of one who is bent on individual holiness and perfection. Often we talk about the individual gospel and the social gospel as though they had little in common. But Jesus here has bound them together, and what Jesus has here bound together we may not separate.[1]

2. Our Lord did not say: 'I sanctify myself for the sake of my own soul, to satisfy my own heart or conscience'; but 'for the sake of man, for the sake of the world.' And the significance of the word is not confined to the hour of crisis. It does not belong only to the decision that led Him to the Cross. Every endowment in the nature and character of Jesus was used, and used freely, in ministering service to the world. The life of our Master meant, of all things, a great service. The cry of the world as it rang in His ears was a perpetual cry for God, the God-life in man. That, indeed, is the outstanding characteristic of the holiness that God has stamped with His own name. It never loses sight of the world and the necessities of the world. The Christian principle does not recognize the existence of a righteousness from which love is absent. The soul cannot forget and forsake its fellows, rising towards the light while it leaves them in the darkness. All the light it gains is for the illumination of the darkest places. There are not two terms in the religion taught of Christ—God and the soul, but three—God, the soul, and the world. Holiness is not godlike until through its music there beats the insistent passion of a social obligation, until we learn to say, 'For their sakes.'

But if it is not enough to say, 'I sanctify myself,' neither is it enough to say, 'For their sakes.' There is a social service which flourishes, or tries to flourish, apart from personal religion. And it is finely generous of any one to resolve, 'I will give my life for their sakes, for the service of the world,' but there is a prior question—the thing that matters most—What kind of a life will you give? Not all men and women are fitted to serve their community. Sanctification means the bringing of our faculties to the uttermost and then consecrating them, laying them upon the altar of God.

¶ Emerson says that the Gulf Stream will run through a straw if it is parallel to the current—and so it will—that is, a little of it

[1] A. Whyte, *The Walk, Conversation and Character of Jesus Christ our Lord*, 243.

[1] G. Buttrick, in *Record of Christian Work*, xliv. 612.

will, but a great deal more of it will run through a ten-foot pipe. A life of a single candle-power and of a single horse-power will do something if it is consecrated to a definite mission, but the hundred-power life is much more *economic*! It uses no more raw material, while its impact on the race, its circle of dynamic influence, is vastly greater.[1]

¶ Milton resolved that he would cherish his gift until it had reached its fruition, and then give it to the world in a work that would be worthy; and he finally accomplished that great aim. In the dedication we see plainly that he realized that before that poem could properly be written he must sanctify himself, and this is the prayer that precedes the greatest of his works:

> And chiefly Thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
> Before all temples the upright heart and pure,
> Instruct me, for Thou know'st: . . .
> what in me is dark
> Illumine, what is low raise and support;
> That, to the height of this great argument,
> I may assert Eternal Providence,
> And justify the ways of God to men.

3. Let us see the light that this truth throws on one or two different aspects of the Christian life.

In the first place it shows the way in which a man attains to righteousness and true holiness. How does any soul make his own the possession of the Christian life? Turning to the gospel for an answer to the question we find this principle clearly laid down. The only way to learn to receive is by giving. The Christian is educated in the school of service. Holiness is won by those who live their lives for the sake of others. To take a simple illustration of that truth. How does forgiveness come to any one? We say, and rightly, that forgiveness depends upon our attitude to God, the soul turning to Him in simple trust in His mercy. But that is not the whole truth revealed by Christ. The test lies in the exhibition of the right attitude to men. There is, and can be, no forgiveness for the soul which has not forgiven. 'Except ye forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.' We receive only as we give. We sanctify ourselves by living for the sake of men. And perhaps the fullest illustration of the truth lies in the paradox that sums up so much of the meaning of the Christian life: 'He that loseth his life shall save it.' For that paradox declares that the supreme gift of all is to be gained by freely expending in the service of others what we look for at the hands of God. The self-centred heart can never possess love. The breadth of life's exit is the measure of life's entrance. Sacrifice opens the doors. Not away from the world can any soul sanctify itself. That would be a false and an unreal holiness. In the school of service we climb to the highest. We are forgiven by forgiving; we obtain mercy by showing it; we live by bestowing love; by living for others' sake, we are sanctified.

In the second place the message it conveys is that each one of us ought to find in the world, in which we are placed by the goodness of God, the supreme incentive to the highest life. How often is something like this said, 'The world is a place full of temptations, a place of evil and danger. We must be on our guard against it constantly to see that these evils do not invade our own life.' Well, no man with his eyes open would ignore the truth of that counsel. There is danger in the world. In every stage of life there lurk influences and dangers that, if submitted to, will bring ruin upon every soul. But, granted that one finds the place evil, what is the strongest defence? Is it by looking at the world as an enemy to be kept at arm's length? Our Lord knew the power of evil over the lives of men. When He prayed for His disciples, these were the words He used: 'I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil that is in the world.' And to what course of life did our Master direct His disciples as the pathway to safety? How did He give effect to His prayer for them? He sent them out into the very midst of the world's life to attack the evils that they found there with the message of healing and transformation. He first took these men into His own companionship. He nurtured in their souls the love of everything that is true and fair and beautiful. He showed them in contrast the needs of man, and He sent them out to minister to those needs. The strong call which is laid upon us by our Lord is to fix our thought not upon what the world may do to us, but upon what we may do for the world. For its sake, we

[1] Rufus M. Jones, *The World Within*, 55.

must consecrate ourselves for a far larger end than our own soul's good.

> Who seeks for heaven alone to save his soul,
> Moving apart, he will not reach the goal;
> While he who walks in love may wander far,
> But God will bring him where the blessed are.

'For their sakes I sanctify myself.' We cannot repeat the words in the same sense in which our Lord uses them, but we can humbly repeat them after Him: 'For the sake of the world I consecrate myself.' Consecrate myself to—what? To a life of purity and of self-control; to a life that will add nothing to the burden of the world's evil, but will rather help to lift that burden; to a life which stands unshaken by the old temptations, like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, and our consecration shall not be for the sake of self, but for the sake of others.

¶ David Livingstone longed for knowledge and for purity of soul. He sought to be an astronomer, a chemist, a botanist, a geographer. He surveyed lands and built houses and steered boats. He laboured to know languages and obtain power among barbarians. How glad he was of recognition in England, and how he valued everything that men called success! But why did he value them? That he might heal that open sore of the world, Africa; that he might be able to call attention to Africa, and bring beneficent aid to Africa, and sanctify Africa. The more he sanctified himself, yes, the larger man he became in his possession of truth, power, and purity, the more Africa lay upon his heart, and the deeper in his soul rang the needs of the dark continent. When, with the early daylight, his servants coming into his room found him dead upon his knees beside his bed, they saw the perfected sanctification of Livingstone expressed in his actually dying for others.[1]

¶ General Booth, the founder of an organization which, while insisting on personal righteousness, does more perhaps than any other to emphasize the selfless nature of true religion, once declared: 'Without any boast, without any vanity, I can assure you that when I gave myself to God I did so more to save others than to save myself.'

That is the example and the spirit and the call of Jesus Christ. No sphere of life can be small when it is filled with that spirit, and no sphere of life can be great without it. The greatest life that has moved along the highway of the world was that of which it was said, in bitter irony, 'He saved others, himself he cannot save!' If redemption has come to us in this way of uncalculating love, then we can never live again in the poor, thin, common way of old; the love of Christ 'constrains us' to live the bold and daring way of faith and love in obedience to His call and in fellowship with His Spirit.

[1] J. G. K. M'Clure, *Loyalty*, 223.

Thoughts on Unity

John xvii. 20, 21.—'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.'

1. *The Call of God.*—The call to unity comes from God. Through unity alone can the Kingdom of God be set up among men. Through unity alone can the world believe and know that the Father has sent Jesus Christ to reveal Himself to the whole human race. It stands as the unalterable condition on which He can fulfil His mission to mankind. Like all God's calls it is an invitation to co-operate with Him. He lays no compulsion on us. He awaits our co-operative response which will lay hold of His will and make it our own. If unity has slipped away from our grasp it is the common fault of the Christian world. If it is to be regained it must be by the concerted action of all Christians. Every section has shared in shattering unity. Every section must share in the effort to restore it. We are asked to hush our prejudices, to sit lightly to our opinions, to look on the things of others as though they were our very own—all this without slighting the convictions of our hearts or our loyalty to God.

What Christ said to the disciples with human voice He repeats now through His indwelling Spirit. The general need of unity is set down by Him in a proverbial saying: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.' This is as true to-day as when it was first uttered. It has been accepted by the world of men as applying to every department of life in its separate groupings, political,

intellectual, scientific, social. In increasingly wide circles men are striving for unity.

Turning to the Gospels what do we find? Our Lord speaks as He thinks, and He thinks in terms of reality. All life is a symbol; He declares that of which it is symbolic. So He says not 'I am like the vine, ye are like the branches,' but 'Abide in me and I in you . . . I am the vine, ye are the branches.' And again, it is not 'I am like the good shepherd.' He is the reality of which the men who watched their flocks were the shadow. It is 'I am the good shepherd.' 'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, one shepherd.' All this was counted as axiomatic even before the Gospels were written. St Paul, writing when the gospel was oral, calls divisions 'carnal'—'for whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? . . . For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.' Division, in the eyes of this intense man, is fatal to the life of the Church. On another occasion it is the human body that is the symbol of which Christ and His Church represent the reality. 'For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. . . . Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular.' Again, the Church is spoken of as a household 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner-stone,' or as a temple, or as the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem. In every instance the symbol has unity as essential to its existence as light and heat are to the sun. So inherent is unity that it can admit of no racial, sex, or social distinctions, but all are 'one man in Christ Jesus.' But there are still greater heights towards which we must rise. Earthly imagery is inadequate and heaven is called to bear its witness. 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.' If our Lord counts unity a necessity, how absolute must that necessity be!

By His life on earth He revealed exactly what the unity was between Himself and His Father. It is not so mystical as to be unintelligible to the simple-hearted. The kind of oneness exhibited by Christ with His Father on earth is clear beyond dispute—a paternal and filial relationship, and a liberty reached through absolute dependence consummated by sacrifice. When all Christians recognize God as Father and look on the things of others as of brothers, the family of God will be complete, a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle. There are patches of unity already, it is true, in an underlying loyalty to Christ. But not enough to make Christianity effective as a peacemaker, a liberator, a universal power, or to satisfy the mind of God.

¶ A Chinese theological professor puts it in this way. 'Before we can win the peoples of the world by teaching them the love of Christ, we must set an example to them how we love one another within the Christian fold. To me the significance of the brief sojourn of the Master on this earth was to teach us, among many other things, the supreme value and necessity of fellowship.

Christ's prayer for His disciples was not for their individual success or individual achievement, but for unity of and love of the group. Love and unity were indeed the two corner-stones of the Christian Church. The Church grew out of fellowship. It was carried on by love.[1]

2. *The Non-Christian World.*—It is highly significant that the growth of the movement towards closer co-operation and unity synchronizes with the recent startling development of divisive movements and influences among men. It comes also at a time when the world mission is confronted with the greatest combination of difficulties which it has ever been called upon to meet. If ever Christian forces needed to present a united front to all that opposes, it is now. And yet the alarming fact is that it is possible that the Christian forces may lose through failure to combine, or, having united, through failure to pay the sacrificial prices necessary. Everywhere we read records of the intense desire for unity felt in the mission-field, where our divisions are a serious stumbling-

[1] Timothy T. Lew, in *The Student World*, xx. 105.

block. Bishop Azariah at the Lausanne Conference gave it as his conviction that 'unity may be theoretically a desirable ideal in Europe and America, but it is vital to the life of the Church in the mission-field. The divisions of Christendom may be a source of weakness in Christian countries, but in non-Christian lands they are a sin and a scandal.'

¶ 'Another mistake concerns the perpetuation of denominationalism. It is regrettable that the old tribal divisions should be again cross-divided by an extraneous sectarianism with the genesis of which the Africans had nothing to do. One outcome of this religious separatism is that the indigenous races have taken these divisions more seriously than did their authors; and the unnecessary emphasis laid on them by some missionaries has produced lively antagonism among the newly-born Christians. . . .

'The overlapping of missionary work due to denominationalism produces some absurdities. For instance, in a village like Nancefield, near Johannesburg, containing only about five thousand natives, there are as many as thirty-four different Gospel bells or wagon-hoops ringing at eleven o'clock of a Sunday morning; and in the Pretoria Location there are sixty-five places of worship!'[1]

Missionaries of all denominations share a common faith in the essentials of the Christian Creed and life; all acknowledge the necessity of a ministry that can safeguard that faith; all aim at planting the seeds of the National Church that is to be under the headship of our Lord Jesus Christ. What are we looking forward to in countries like China and India? Surely our aspiration is that some day there will be a Church of China in China and a Church of India in India. How are we preparing for this consummation of all the missionary efforts in India of all Christendom? Surely it ought to be by a manifest unity of spirit among all the Christian bodies at work there in presenting the living personality of Christ as the one possible uniting force among the varied races of India. We can only prepare the way for the Indian Church that is to be. 'India,' as one of her own distinguished sons said, 'will go direct to the fountain head, not further down the stream where controversies have disturbed the clear waters. India will form her own Church and express Christ in her own terms.' What are we doing to prepare for this? Something of a prophetic imagination is needed to see the immense possibilities of our position.

3. *Difficulties in the Way.*—At present, in a hundred ways, Christians differ from each other, but in proportion as we rally around the living Christ shall we banish our prejudices, enlighten our understanding, and correct our mistakes. We think of our differences mainly as denominational, and we ascribe them chiefly, and quite rightly, to hereditary or traditional sunderings into distinct camps, some of which had an almost accidental origin. But some were the result of deep-down differences of temperament, which create independent lines of cleavage, if cleavage it really be, inside as well as outside our own communion. We are apt to forget by what different roadways the truths of God, even the deepest, the most sacred, the most unchallenged truths, come home to men of different make and temperament.

After all it is not central principles that give us great difficulty. Rather is it that which lies at the circumference—the government of the Church or Order. 'Perhaps the greatest obstacle to the cause of union,' according to Canon Streeter, 'is the belief—entertained more or less explicitly by most bodies of Christians—that there is some form of Church order which alone is primitive, and which alone, therefore, possesses the sanction of apostolic precedent. Our review of the historic evidence has shown this belief to be an illusion. In the primitive Church no one system of Church order prevailed. Everywhere there was readiness to experiment and, where circumstances seemed to demand it, to change. Yet it is permissible to hint that the first Christians achieved what they did because the spirit with which they were inspired was favourable to experiment. In this—and perhaps in other respects—it may be that the line of advance to-day is not to imitate the forms, but to recapture the spirit of the Primitive Church.'

¶ 'I would have a unity,' says Dr Peake, 'in which the greatest elasticity should be not simply permitted but welcomed. Every variety of organization, every shade of belief consistent with loyalty to our central affirmations, every type of worship congenial to our varied tempera-

[1] D. D. T. Jabavu, *The Segregation Fallacy and Other Papers*, 121 f.

ments, should find in such a Church its legitimate home. Let us remind ourselves at the outset that our protests against positions we believe to be false, however necessary such protests may be, almost inevitably narrow us. We tend to push them into the centre instead of keeping them in their place. Then our emphasis is wrongly distributed, our presentation of the perfect orb of truth is distorted. We may regard views and usages as matters of principle, when we are really invoking that sacred name for our prejudices or our habits. There are indeed fixed principles, permanent characteristics, which must abide through all flux and change. But we can stereotype no stage in the Church's history—primitive Church, undivided Church, Western Church, or any later development.' [1]

4. *A Lost Apologetic.*—'That the world may believe.' Incomparably the most serious aspect of continued divisions and aloofness among Christians, and of failure to give unmistakable impression of unity not only in name and spirit, but also in Christlike attitude and service, is that we rob the Christian religion of its mightiest apologetic. On the authority of Christ this is the one He had in mind when He prayed, 'that they all may be one . . . that the world may believe.' In this prayer He revealed that such unity or oneness is possible and obligatory. Every extension of the visible fellowship of Christians will increase the power of the Church to witness to its Lord. If an unbelieving world in these days sees a growing unity in the international field and in other relations, and at the same time observes Christians of different communions, nationalities, and races unable to demonstrate that they love and trust one another enough to unite, what other conclusion can it form than that the Church has vacated her spiritual leadership? [2]

The Message of the Gardens

John xviii. 1.—'Where was a garden.'

The meaning of Nature is greatly deepened by the joys or by the sufferings of mankind. A place that is associated with some great experience can never be common or unclean again. We live our life in a world of hill and stream, and we strive or fall amid streets or fields or forests, until at length the ground on which we tread is ennobled or debased by what we are. There are scenes where we resisted sin and conquered it, and they will always be beautiful to us, even in November. There are spots where we yielded—where we gave way and fell—and all the sunshine of July cannot make them fair. So gradually do we impress ourselves upon the outward world through which we move, and the glory of it is heightened or is lost by the kind of battle we are fighting.

Now, it is notable that the world's pristine happiness, and the deepest sorrow of all earthly history, are for ever associated with gardens. In our modern life, if we wish the brightest and the darkest, the place that we naturally turn to is a city. But in the Bible, if we seek the brightest and the darkest, it is not to a city we turn, but to a garden. There are three great garden scenes in Scripture which may help to illustrate the truth of this.

First, the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. It is the Bible's picture of a golden age, when the music of heaven and earth was one great harmony. There was no sin then, nor was there any suffering; there was an exquisite and unutterable peace.

The Lord God planted a garden
  In the first white days of the world;
And set there an angel warden,
  In a garment of light enfurled.

So near to the peace of Heaven,
  The hawk might nest with the wren;
For there in the cool of the even,
  God walked with the first of men.

Now let the ages roll by, and hearken to this: 'When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.' *Here* was the greatest agony in history, as in the other garden was the greatest happiness. Picture the darkness—the figure prostrate on the ground—the bloody sweat—the approaching noise and tumult; picture the glare of the torches and the flash of Peter's sword, and the kiss of Judas, and the base betrayal. In a garden man had been

[1] A. S. Peake, *Plain Thoughts on Great Subjects*, 31.
[2] J. R. Mott, *The Present-Day Summons*, 153.

happy once: now in a garden Jesus was betrayed. The kiss of love has become the kiss of treachery. The dew of Eden has changed to the sweat of blood. The first Adam had been thrice blessed in a garden; but the soul of the Second Adam, in a garden, was sorrowful even unto death.

And then, a little later, we read this: 'In the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus.' The darkest tragedy of earth was over, and it ended where all earth's happiness began. Fresh from the hand of God, quivering with life, man had been placed in a garden at the first. Fresh from the Cross, with eyes that were sealed in death, the Son of Man was placed in a garden at the last.

1. There is one great lesson in these stories. God would have us learn that where we have most enjoyed, there—in that very sphere—may we most suffer. For it is where life has been most strong and rich—most full of the joy and peace and glory of the morning—it is just there, and in no other sphere, that the sweat as of blood is wrung from human brows. Our *home* is our garden, a garden of the Lord, and we are happy there; and is it not just there that anxieties are bitterest, and that the sorrows fall which are too deep for words? Our *work* is our garden—there is a glow and a zest and an inspiration in it; but when the hands are heavy and we seem to strive in vain and make no progress, is it not just there, if we are in earnest at all, that the possibilities of misery are dreadful? Our darkest is always the shadow of our brightest. And there are men so hopelessly poor-spirited that they would rather miss the glory of their paradise than take it, as God always gives it to us, with the shadow of Gethsemane upon it.

2. 'In the place where he was crucified there was a garden.' There is something very suggestive in the way in which the Evangelist introduces that. To John it was no mere coincidence that in the place of the supreme surrender there should be the fragrance and the blossoming of flowers. One might have thought to find a desert there. One might have counted on a bleak and dreary scene. What struck the mystical eye of John was that everything was the opposite of that. Christ died. He gave Himself for men. He poured out His life in full surrender—and in the place where all this happened was a *garden*.

So we touch the profound truth that John, in the spirit of poetry, is hinting at. He hints that there always *is* a garden when we share in the self-surrender of our Lord. Let any man deny himself, let him willingly lay down his life for others, let him surrender what is dearest to him in the self-abandonment of love, and the strange thing is that everything grows beautiful, and the flowers begin to blossom at his feet, in a way they never did before. It seems to be a hard, bleak life, the life of a continuous self-denial. It seems to rob one of self-realization, and of many a sweet thing which is the gift of God; but John saw it was entirely otherwise. Live for self, and we move into a wilderness. Sooner or later the scenery grows desolate. The music goes; the fragrance disappears; the world grows cold and meaningless and ugly. Live for others, for the sake of those who need us; and in the place where we are crucified *there is a garden*.

¶ W. D. Howells, the American novelist, tells the story of a young girl who was unaware of her descent from an ancestor of colour. Her father and mother had died without making the disclosure. Her fair skin and aquiline features gave no hint of her origin. The time came when she had to be told. She faced the question of her obligation to those whose blood she shared until it became a sleepless anguish. She went down to their meetings. She mingled with them in closer contact, to find that her training had given her a revulsion to their habits and ways. For months she hesitated to make the great surrender. But at last she accepted the call of Christ, and gave herself to the uplifting of the long-enslaved African people. Then she found—life. A new liberty was given to her thought. A new purpose set its mark upon her character. A new joy flooded her spirit and its sheen was on her face.[1]

When I myself did seek,
And to myself would live,
How poor was I! How weak!
Life had no boon to give
To me, a captive bird confined
In the dull cage of my own mind.

[1] W. M. Clow, *The Evangel of the Strait Gate*, 7.

There was no joy in life,
  Nor any warmth nor light;
Each day a fruitless strife,
  Blank weariness each night;
A slave was I, whom none might free
From my own cruel tyranny.

But when my sole desire
  Was to be used by Thee;
Consumed, as in a fire,
  Or, in the boundless sea
Of Thine unending Being lost,
A pebble in th' Atlantic toss'd;

Straightway my soul did find
  Herself, and all her powers;
My conquering spirit bind
  And rule the captive hours;
And the whole world submissive bring
Tribute to me, her Lord and King.

(1) One might think of *daily work* a moment, for work, to many, is uncongenial drudgery. It is hard to be tied to counter or to desk when the voices of the bigger world are calling. To feel that one is missing things always brings an ache into the soul. And there are multitudes, chained to their day's labour, who have the restless feeling that they are missing things. What a wonderful difference it would make to them, fretted with their daily crucifixion, if they would write this text upon their hearts.

¶ Dr G. H. Morrison writes: 'I was talking to a doctor once who practises in the Riviera. Most of his patients are the kind of people who spend their lives following the sun. And when I asked him if such folk were happy, he answered in words I can never forget: "Happy! They're the most miserable people on God's earth."'

We are not here to do just what we like. We are here to do just what we ought. Did not Wordsworth say of the man who does his duty, 'flowers laugh before him in their beds'? When we do our bit we never miss the best. The road to the garden always lies that way. Sometimes it seems a daily crucifixion, especially in the leafy month of June. But sooner or later we all discover, what the eye of John was quick to note, that in the place where He was crucified there was a garden.

(2) Again, we think of *cross-bearing*, for cross-bearing is a universal thing. Every life has the shadow it must enter, and every life the cross that it must bear. Now sometimes it is very hard to bear the cross. There are seasons when we are tempted to rebel. If our cross were gone, how happy might we be. Life would be like 'a melody in tune.' Yet who can look on life, and watch its issues, and follow the track of patient cross-bearing, without discovering that the flinty track is God's appointed road into the garden?

Lord, Thou deceivest me!
A slave I was to be:
Thou gav'st me liberty.

Lord, Thou deceivest me!
Thy cross I bow'd to kiss:
Thou gav'st me—what is this?
The first-fruits of Thy bliss.[1]

(3) Or, once more, one's thoughts turn to *the Christian life*, for the Christian life is never easy. Strait is the gate and narrow is the way. If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh. Is *that* an easy life? One might well think that such a life as that would be a desolate and dreary business, and there are many who shun it on that score. What! Surrender my life, with its freedoms and its sweet and secret pleasures? Turn my days into an arid desert, where no passion-flowers can ever grow? But the strange thing is that with the great surrender there comes gladness, and birds begin to sing, and every common flower takes new beauty. To be made captive by the Lord Jesus Christ is to have the freedom of the universe.

¶ Frances Ridley Havergal found the joy of this experience. 'I am very happy at last,' she wrote, after she had made the great surrender. 'I committed my soul to the Saviour—I do not mean to say without any trembling or fear; but I did—and earth and heaven seemed bright from that moment.'

3. There is another contrast that suggests itself between the Garden of Eden and the Garden of the Sepulchre. When man had fallen, and when his eyes had been opened, there was heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden, and Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of God among the garden trees. That is the one picture; man has

[1] Jacinto Verdaguer, translated by E. Allison Peers.

fallen, and he is hiding from the Almighty's presence. And now it is the Resurrection morning, and it is still early—the sun has not risen yet; and to the garden where the body of Christ was laid come Mary Magdalene and John and Peter. For whom are they looking? Why all this eager searching? 'They have taken away my Lord,' cries one of them, 'and I know not where they have laid him.' The fact is that they are searching for the Master whom Adam and Eve in paradise had shunned. Was Peter sinless, then? Was Mary immaculate? They were children of frailty, tarnished and soiled with sin, yet in the one garden, long ago, the man and the woman had hid themselves from God; and in this garden, on the Resurrection morning, the man and the woman come hurrying to seek Him.

What does that tell us? It tells us this, that *a gospel had come whose secret and power is love.* In the early morning Mary and Peter were *drawn* to the side of Christ. Fear would not do that; reverence would not do it. They could not help but run, because they loved Him. Some men are buried with much pomp and ceremony, and being buried are straightway forgotten. They may have been feared, they may even have been honoured, but they sleep unvisited because they were not loved. But others, though dead, still draw the living to them. They were loved—that is the mystery. 'He loved me, and gave himself for me,' *there* is the drawing power of the gospel. Thank God! the grave is empty and the Christ is risen, and to be drawn is to be lifted heavenward.

The Manliness of Jesus

John xviii. 6.—'As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.'

In every generation our religion has to defend itself against criticism. And we need not wonder. For it claims to be the final expression of the highest life man can find. An objection we sometimes hear is that Christianity is a religion of the weak. What, they say, is the central command of Jesus? It is: Resist not evil, turn the other cheek, love your enemies, pray for those who maltreat you. Well, that is the virtue of the defenceless and the downtrodden, the feeble folk who cannot battle for themselves. Science teaches that the world is a place of struggle where men are driven by the wants and desires within them and where the prizes are for those who can take them. The religion of Jesus is outside this circle of ideas: it is not in tune with Nature, which is a nursing-mother of strong men. Its note is not the resounding note of battle, the clarion call which thrills the hearts of the brave and brings the joy of victory. Rather, it is the consolation of the humble, the joy of the obscure, the comfort and strength of the weak.

¶ Nietzsche snarls at Christianity as effeminate and enervating, with its talk of pity and tenderness and humility and forbearance. Let us fling ourselves boldly into the wild mêlée of life, he cries, asking no quarter, and expecting none. And if the weakling goes to the wall, who cares about weaklings? Competition is the law of health: and it is there, wrestling with difficulties and struggling with his peers, that man has gained his valour and his hardihood of soul.[1]

¶ When Turner, says Ruskin, paints the religion of England, he shows you 'a meek old woman and a child being let into a pew, for whom the reading by candlelight will be beneficial.'[2]

That it is a religion of the weak is a criticism of Christianity that strikes at its very heart. But it is founded on a wrong sense of value: strength and self-reliance are grand qualities; little excellence is to be gathered without them; but they are second to love; and they are much more easily compassed. As the modern poet of doubt has told us:

> But in the world I learnt, what there
> Thou too wilt surely one day prove,
> That will, that energy, though rare,
> Are yet far far less rare than love.

But is this criticism in any way true? Is Christianity an apotheosis of weakness? What is our Christian faith but the adoration and imitation of Jesus? Look at Him and declare if in all the history of the world there is the record of any braver and more courageous soul than He.

1. Take the matter of *physical courage.* That is the lesser form of manliness, but the world always admires most the virtue nearest its own

[1] A. J. Gossip, *The Galilean Accent*, 206.
[2] *Modern Painters.*

capacity and, therefore, most obvious. How stands our Lord when tried by that test? Is He who counselled non-resistance to be ranked among the timid or the brave?

When for the first time Jesus preached at Nazareth He stirred the townsfolk against Him. By His sermon He so aroused their passions that they mobbed Him as He came out of the synagogue: they led Him to the brow of the hill above the town and would have cast Him headlong to death. A brave soldier has said that the most unnerving spectacle is that of an angry mob seeking to lynch a man. But Jesus faced this mob with such self-possession and dignity of bearing that they were overawed.

Look again at the Christ in the Garden and before the Rulers. Napoleon said that the finest courage was 'two-o'clock-in-the-morning' courage. It was in the grey hours of the morning, after a night of mental agony, that the soldiers came. Jesus might well have been worn out, weak as is a breaking wave. Among all the actors in that long-drawn-out drama He was the only one who kept untroubled the peace and possession of His soul. When He came forward and said, 'I am he,' the soldiers fell back in confusion, awed like the villagers of Nazareth by His peace and dignity. Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin were the slaves of passion; Pilate was tossed between anger and contempt and pitiful weakness; Jesus alone was master of all His powers. What worshipper of courage could desire a better leader than Jesus of Nazareth?

¶ Conceive a strong and strenuous young Jewish workman, alive to all the delights of Nature, and with the crowning joy of a pure heart and a clear conscience and an invigorating consciousness of God: conceive a massive head and rugged face strongly marked with thought and sympathy, but with the mystic light of moral victory there; conceive dark, keen, flashing eyes that can speak equally easily inspiration and indignation: and you have the figure that 'wanders through my dreams,' the 'Happy Warrior' behind whom I hope to fight till I die.[1]

Jesus, whose lot with us was cast,
Who saw it out, from first to last:
Patient and fearless, tender, true,
Carpenter, vagabond, felon, Jew:
Who, as your hour neared, did not fail—
The world's fate trembling in the scale—
With your half-hearted band to dine,
And chat across the bread and wine;
Then went out firm to face the end,
Alone, without a single friend:
Who felt, as your last words confessed,
Wrung from a proud, unflinching breast
By hours of dull, ignoble pain,
Your whole life's fight was fought in vain:
Would I could win and keep and feel
That heart of love, that spirit of steel.

[1] J. Silvester Horne.

2. Let us consider now how Jesus stands to *moral courage*, the far rarer and more splendid virtue.

We have seen that in the great crises, those calls which make a sudden demand upon all a man's courage, our Lord shows Himself like a man inspired. Were these exceptions in His life? Did the Teacher of love and meekness bear Himself in all else as one of the timid or weak to whom gentleness is the only possible virtue? No, the truth rather is that courage is the foundation quality of His character; courage is the woof on which were interwoven all those strands of pity and gentleness and meekness which make up that lovely and noble soul.

Take up the Gospel of St Mark, and read the first story of His public activity, and what do we find? We see Him offending the religious world—the party that was most powerful in the land. He healed a man in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. The apostle of the modern worship of strength accuses the Christian religion of timidity. Its chief virtue, he says, is prudence, whereas the true counsel is—throw prudence to the winds and live dangerously. The Prophet of Nazareth, when in the wilderness He planned His way, elected to live dangerously. He set forth deliberately on a road that was bound to give mortal offence to the rulers of the Church. He healed on the Sabbath: He did works of loving-kindness on that day which in their eyes was to be polluted by no manner of work. He neglected also the many fastings and prayers and ceremonial cleansings which they deemed the very mark of a true worshipper of Jehovah. He companied freely with sinners and outcasts: and He even taught that the Kingdom of God would number them as citizens sooner than

those who seemed specially holy and religious. The truth demanded that He should speak and act so: sympathy and love for man demanded that He should speak and act so: and though He saw the faces of all the religious leaders set as flint against Him, yet He never looked aside. Jesus knew well that the blessed message of God which makes all men equal and seeks only to redeem would not fall like music on the ears of proud and vainglorious men. But God had called Him to this task—love for men had called Him: and, having girt up His loins for the bold enterprise and committed His soul to the Father, He went forth to the battle, never fearing, never turning aside, to win at last only by the absolute sacrifice of Himself.

The Carpenter of Nazareth had the courage to oppose the religious world of His day, the men of influence and power. But many a demagogue has done that, upborne by the cheers of the mob. What really tests a man's courage and his insight is his relation to his neighbours. The honour and love of the little world in which we dwell, the look in the faces round about us—these are the powers that test a man's sincerity and courage. Jesus was a Man of the people. He was also a layman, rather than a churchman, exposed to the public opinion of the people rather than of the religious class. How did He bear Himself in relation to this world—the world of men and women whose thoughts and opinions had been the air His spirit breathed?

We find that He opposed this world as resolutely and completely as He opposed the world of scribe and Pharisee. The people would not be so out of sympathy with His preaching and conduct as the rabbis and ecclesiastics. They lived more simply among the common thoughts and charities: but they had the limitations of the people, which are the same in all ages and in all lands. They had material conceptions of life: their dreams of a Messiah and of the blessings of His time were of the earth earthy. They hoped for political freedom, and national glory and prosperity; they desired days when their corn and wine would abound. Jesus belonged to their class, but He knew that not in better wages and dwellings was to be found the secret of happiness. He dared to cherish another dream, the dream of a new society in which men should become sons of God whose joy is to help and serve. It showed rare courage to send His hopes along this lonely road where neither the thought of His neighbours nor the thought of the rabbis had gone. Only let Him bend to their earthly dreams, and they will set Him on high. But not for one moment did He yield. He made it clear to all that He was bringing them no social or economic panacea for the world's ills. He preached love as the creative spirit in life, the delight in goodness and the joy in brotherhood as the hope for men. And then they fell away from Him with the anger of disappointed hope in their hearts.

Jesus went His own way. Deep in His heart He heard a voice which He knew to be the voice of God the Father. And with unfaltering steps He followed whithersoever it led: down into the dark shadow of the world's opposition, on amid the wrath and curses of men, till at last on the Cross it crowned Him with thorns.

And who the bravest of the brave;
  The bravest hero ever born?
'Twas one who dared a felon's grave,
  Who dared to breathe the scorn of scorn.
Nay, more than this: when sword was drawn,
  And vengeance waited for His word,
He looked with pitying eyes upon
  The scene, and said, 'Put up thy sword.'
O God! could man be found to-day
As brave to do, as brave to say?

The Cup of Life

John xviii. 11.—'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?'

THESE words are Christ's disclaimer of the physical violence with which His foremost disciple sought to defend Him in the hour of His betrayal and arrest. He would not accept the defence of the sword because He recognized the malignant enmity of men as part of the lot which He had gladly accepted when He took upon Him the burden of the world's sin and the task of the world's redemption. To falter then, or to fall back on human aid in the inevitable last struggle, would be a denial of His Father, and a violation of filial love. In that dark hour He looked not upon the will of His foes, but upon the will of His Father, which was always 'good and acceptable and perfect' to Him. Hence this question to Peter, to which He neither expected nor waited for an answer.

1. The expression 'cup' is commonly used throughout the Old Testament to denote some experience of life in relation to God. For instance, the Psalmist says, 'The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup;' and again, 'My cup runneth over;' and yet again, 'I will take the cup of salvation.' Christ thus takes a well-understood figure and applies it to Himself, and His words are invested with deep and tender meaning by the fact that but a few hours previously He had Himself given a cup to His disciples, in the drinking of which they should commemorate for all time His dying love. This experience of the Upper Room fresh in their minds doubtless enabled them to grasp the import of these words, and illumined as in a flash the whole of His life, so inexplicable in many ways even to those who had been most closely associated with Him. His whole life is as a cup which has been delivered into His hand by the Father. Hence His willingness to drain it to the dregs.

It is significant to notice the progress in His apprehension of and submission to His Father's will. At first, when the darkness begins to gather and the gloom of the approaching end settles upon Him, He prays, 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' Later He says, 'If this cup may not pass except I drink it, thy will be done.' But now before His followers, and doubtless having in mind the strengthening of their faith and encouraging of their purpose, it is this glad and victorious word which He utters, 'Shall I not drink it?' This is indeed a progress toward ultimate and complete triumph. The draining of the cup is not to Him a defeat in the unequal contest with the world, but a glorious triumph of love and loyalty. He has already drunk much, but not one drop is to be spilled. Thus in devotion to the Father He 'tasted death for every man.' And His cup of death has in an inexplicable way opened for us the fountain of life.

¶ This sentence is expanded in the Gospel of St Matthew in the narrative of the Garden of Gethsemane, and that narrative is expanded in the mosaics of St Mark's at Venice in a very striking way. The mosaist has represented each of the three prayers separately. In the first, the Lord is bowed prostrate on His face, and an impenetrable gloom seems to cover the sun. In the second prayer, He is bowed, but not so low, and the victory is coming, for there is a little blue in the sky, and a star is shining. And in the third, He is no longer bowed, but kneels upright with His face turned heavenwards, and now the light has filled the sky. The victory of surrender is complete!

Death and the curse were in the cup,
O Christ, 'twas full for Thee;
But Thou hast drained the last dark drop,
'Tis empty now for me.
That bitter cup, love drank it up,
Now blessing's draught for me.

2. But it is in their wider application to the lives of His disciples that these words must also be pondered, for they express that attitude of submission and trust which conditions a life of peace and power. As of old, He still says to those who seek closest fellowship with Him, 'Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?' and to their willingness responds, 'Ye shall indeed drink of it.' It is therefore helpful to see and think of life under this figure—'the cup which my Father hath given me to drink'—a cup not of suffering merely, for so to think of it narrows the meaning of the figure and restricts its blessing, but rather the cup of the will of God.

It is well to remember that all our experiences are limited and their duration fixed. We are sometimes apt, under the depression of sorrow, or disappointment, or the weariness of toil, to imagine that these things are beyond our bearing power. There seems to be no end of them, and faith ebbs under their sustained pressure. Well it is then to recall these words of the Saviour and make them our own. The Father has put into the cup just the measure which He knows is needful and sufficient. He is not indifferent to our pain, our weakness, and our sorrow. He is not deaf to our cry, or careless of our desires, and His answer to them all is the cup which He has given.

And not only is its content measured, but its quality is also assured—it is a cup both measured and mixed by the Father Himself. Its ingredients are carefully chosen with Divine prevision, and its joys, sorrows, temptations, duties, and responsibilities all go to make up an elixir of life. As our physician, He knows what is needed to heal our diseases, to brace our energies, to calm our imagination. He knows, too, as only our Father can, what is needed to strengthen our lives, to develop our powers, to

form our character. Thus it is that the cup which He gives us to drink is always a cup of salvation.

3. Let us not forget that Christ drank His cup for the sake of others, and that with His followers as with Himself the note of the vicarious is never absent from life. We cannot live unto ourselves even if we would, and we dare not because we have been called into fellowship with His aims and into sympathy with His purposes. To save others must become the passion of our lives as it was of His, and this can be accomplished only at the same price. The drinking of the cup which the Father hath given is the necessary condition upon which the blessing of other hearts and lives depends. Indeed, it is impossible to enter into the experiences of others in such a way as to lift and help them, unless we ourselves know something by personal experience of similar need. Only he whose heart has been broken can touch the broken heart of another without causing pain; only he who himself has known loss and impoverishment can encourage the one from whom all things seem to be slipping away; only the one who has known the smart of sorrow and the sting of pain can help some burdened, sorrowing, stricken heart to sing 'songs in the night.'

¶ We are told that when Queen Victoria visited her Highland home at Balmoral, after the death of the Prince Consort, she used to go into the humble homesteads of the people in the country round about Balmoral Castle which she knew had been visited by sorrow. And the lowly cottagers found comfort in the presence and sympathy of the Queen, who could enter into their trouble with them, because she had passed through deep waters herself.

The most solemn of all considerations is as to our power of choice. God does not force the cup upon us, or compel us against our will to drink what He has prepared and offers. It is always possible to turn from His love, though to do so is unwittingly to drink to our own destruction. Let us lay then to heart the fact that it is our Father's hand which holds the cup to our lips and strengthen ourselves with the remembrance that His love is—

Too wise to err,
Too good to be unkind.

And in the solitude in which each one must register his supreme spiritual decisions let us face out the question, 'Shall I not drink it?' Then with conviction of conscience and constraint of heart, taking up the cup, let us pledge Him in His own vintage, and go forth day by day to live out our sacramental loyalty. And when life is over and Heaven begun, its joy shall be just to drink for ever of the same cup, and to 'drink it new' with the Saviour in the Kingdom.

The Questioning of Annas

John xviii. 19.—'The high priest therefore asked Jesus of his disciples' (R.V.).

1. In the account of the trial of our Lord before Annas there occurs at one point an arresting sequence. 'Now the servants and the officers were standing there, having made a fire of charcoal; for it was cold; and they were warming themselves: and Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself. The high priest *therefore* asked Jesus of his disciples.'

The charcoal brazier apparently was standing in the courtyard of Annas' palace; but the faces of those gathered about it could be plainly seen by those within the hall where the examination of Jesus was going on. It is a picture with which we are very familiar—a cold night of stars and full moon; the fitful spitting of the charcoal making those bending too near start suddenly back; the red glow reflected from well-polished shield or breastplate or helmet. The farcical examination of Jesus is proceeding none too satisfactorily from the point of view of Annas, one feeble charge after another threatening to break down. Suddenly among the huddling figures round the fire is seen emerging from the gloom behind and appearing within the ring of glowing light a haggard, drawn, and anxious face. Annas may not have realized who it was—a venturesome follower of the Nazarene; but, by one of those inexplicable impulses which are apt to stir at critical and tense moments, a thought flashes through the labouring mind of the astute old politician, and he switches his line of cross-examination on to another tack. This Jesus, if he has really done so much good as some have tried to make out, will surely have one or two friends who are ready to appear in his defence. There

were some disciples in the garden with him when the soldiers took him, Annas has been told. All forsook him and fled, did they? Here is a real weak spot in the defence. What evidence could he adduce to show that he was building up a body of devoted followers? Was his mission after all Divine if he could not show a single man who was prepared to stake his life upon it? Wise words and good deeds and moral reformation are all very well; but the acid test is the kind of men a religion makes. Annas and Caiaphas and Pilate can find no fault in Jesus Himself, but He is vulnerable in the persons of His disciples. 'The high priest therefore asked Jesus of his disciples.'

2. That is evermore the point at which Christianity is attacked. Men question about the disciples, and profess to settle the case by their failings. They point to the scandals of the Church, the din of controversy, the noisy quarrels between denominations, the breaches of justice and of charity, and they mock at the religion which is thus represented. They call up the names of those who profess Christ, and recite the tale of their hardness, of their avarice, of their arrogance, of their secret transactions, of their hypocrisy. They refuse to look at Christ Himself. They will, like Annas, go on to discuss His doctrines, but it is of the disciples that they most love to speak.

¶ 'Look there,' said a young man to Henry Drummond, 'you see that elderly gentleman? He is the founder of our infidel club.' 'But he is a leading elder of the Church!' 'I know he is; but he founded our infidel club. Every man in the village knows what a humbug he is, and so we will have nothing to do with religion.'

It is an unfair, it is an unreasonable, way that the Annases of to-day have, but the fact for our consideration is that this is the way they are judging Christ and finding excuse for hurrying Him out of their lives. The question would have died on Annas' lips if Jesus had been able to point to Simon Peter at His side, rough, impulsive, not too polished in tongue, but with a heart of gold, and ready to go anywhere and suffer anything at his Master's side. Instead of that, what does the picture show us? A man scarcely distinguishable in ought save accidentals from the avowed enemies of Jesus; one who, in his anxiety not to be mistaken again for a disciple of the Nazarene, outdoes even the soldiers themselves in the coarseness of his language, in act and attitude. 'The servants and the officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire; for it was cold; and they were warming themselves: and Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.' We feel at once that the degree of intimacy between disciple and enemies is altogether too much. There is absolutely no suggestion of contrast. Friend and foe alike are blended into one indistinguishable blur in the uncertain light of that glowing brazier.

'The high priest therefore asked Jesus of his disciples.' If they really were men like that, even the best of them, even the one who cared enough about the ultimate fate of his Master to follow Him into the palace, there was surely something wrong. And the unfriendly world cannot be altogether blamed if it expresses at least mild surprise that, in an hour when vital religious issues are at stake, the Christian disciple should be practically indistinguishable from those who have no interest whatsoever in the matter. It is quite healthy to mix with the world and do as it does; but the outside critic cannot be altogether blamed if he feels that there is something wrong when the disciple is so obviously intent on the pursuit of material comfort while all that the Master holds dear is going through the most critical hour in its history.

It is possible to do a great deal nowadays to make one's self forget the prevalent discomfort. It is easier than ever for the distinguishing marks that betray the disciple to be overlooked and forgotten. Is there not rather more than a danger that we shall forget how critical an hour it is for the fortunes of all for which the Master came to earth? Is it greatly to be wondered at if the cynical onlooker says to himself, 'Can the claims of this Jesus of Nazareth be so paramount if the disciple betrays not a sign of apprehension as to how the issue of the long night will go, as to what kind of a day will dawn for the cause of Jesus Christ?'

¶ 'The gravamen of the charge against the Church,' writes Dr L. P. Jacks, 'is not so much that there are definite abuses in its corporate life, as that there is a general atmosphere of acquiescence in all that is worldly and conventional. No one knows exactly what ideal of life the Church stands for, unless that it is

that of a kindly and good-natured toleration of things as they are, with a mild desire that they may grow better in time, so far as that is compatible with the maintenance of existing vested interests.'

3. In nothing is the Divine consciousness of Jesus more evidently shown or more clearly set forth than in the fact of His amazing, His daring, faith in the men and women whom He has charged to remember Him, and to hold forth the evidence of their remembrance of Him before the gaze of the world. If there is a call for faith in God on the part of man it is nothing to the call for faith in man on the part of God. Well did our Lord realize the presence of what would seem to be a weak spot in His scheme for the redemption of the world. He knew very well that men would ask Him of His disciples. No one saw more clearly than He the tremendous risk He ran in committing His treasure to such frail earthen vessels. It would have been far easier for Him to have made His appeal only to a select coterie of 'souls.' Those cultured Greeks who came to Jerusalem for the express purpose of seeking Him out would never have let Him down. He might have gone with them and established a school in whose sheltered cloisters He could have expounded, developed, and unfolded all the riches of His mind and heart. In such congenial company there would have been no room for misunderstanding. There would have been no criticism, only unbounded reverence for the amazing wisdom of the great Teacher. There would have been no Gethsemane, no Annas, no Cross. Surely it was that thought, that momentary fierce temptation, which occasioned that mysterious soul-trouble of the Saviour at the visit of the Greeks. The world would certainly have been blessed in that way, but it would not have been saved, and 'therefore came I forth.' The gift of God had to be placed within the offer of every man, those who could understand and those who seemed incapable of understanding, those who would welcome and those who would refuse. Knowing that they would ask Him of His disciples, knowing the risk He was running, Jesus chose to trust the people.

¶ There is a legend that when our Lord returned to Heaven the angel Gabriel asked Him what precautions He had taken to safeguard the fruits of His victory. And Christ made quiet reply that He was trusting to His disciples, and that nothing more was needed.

And may we not say that the great trusting Master of us all relies on memory as one of His sure allies. That is why Communion seasons come, with all their poignant power to stir our hearts by way of remembrance. This particular Greek word for a charcoal fire occurs only twice in the whole of the New Testament. It is used of this fire where Simon was warming himself on the betrayal night, when all the interests of God and of humanity were being betrayed into the hands of sinners. And it is used but once again, when, after the Resurrection, the disciples saw through the early morning mist that dim Figure standing on the shore of the lake. 'So when they got out upon the land, they see a fire of charcoal there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.' We know the almost unique power of the sense of smell to awaken memory. And when once again the pungent fumes of charcoal floated to him on the keen early morning air, and the birds of dawning began to cry to the new day from distant lake-shore villages, Simon remembered and understood, and drew near and warmed himself. And as He broke the bread once again to the contrite disciple, the Saviour saw of the travail of His soul, and was satisfied.

THE CHRIST OF HEARSAY AND THE CHRIST OF EXPERIENCE

John xviii. 34.—'Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?'

All that week rumour had been busy in the capital. Every night excited crowds had been parading the streets, and one word was on every lip—'The king of the Jews!' No one quite knew where or how the rumour had originated. Some talk there was of a procession of pilgrims from Galilee the Sabbath before who had come into the city shouting 'Hosanna.' Some said it was they who had started it, but no one seemed to be sure. However it had originated,

the rumour was there, flying all round the city —'The King is coming!'

They talked about it in the markets over their bargaining. 'Any further news?' they asked one another. 'Where can He be hiding? Has anyone seen Him?' The children on the way home from school talked about it. 'We are going to see a real coronation,' they said, 'a real live king with a golden crown.' The Church courts that were in session debated it, and appointed a committee to look into it. The Roman garrison got wind of it, and doubled the guards, and patrolled the streets at night. Everywhere that rumour was flying—'The King!'

And then it all turned out to be a hoax! 'The coming King, why, have you not heard the news?' they were saying to one another that night. 'Don't you know who He is? It is that wandering preacher from Nazareth called Jesus, who made a scene in the Temple the other day! That poor deluded soul with His hallucinations and His megalomania! A carpenter's apprentice for a King!' And with that the hopes that had been dashed turned to anger. 'He will suffer for this!' they said. 'Arrested already, is He? Good! He will die for it!' And down the streets to Pilate's palace they poured, to see what was going to happen.

Inside, Pilate and Jesus were face to face. Pilate too had heard the rumours about the king. Pilate's sleep had been uneasy for a week because of the rumours about the king. And now there was the Man in front of him; and Pilate, looking at Him, questioning Him, almost began to feel there was something in the rumour after all, half-believed the thing was really true. And yet how could it be? Oh, if he were only sure! 'Who are you?' he breaks out at last. 'Speak, man! Tell me! *Are* you a king?' Then quietly but searchingly it comes, the question of Jesus that goes right to the roots of all religion, 'Pilate, sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?'

1. But let us leave Pilate now, for this is Christ's question to every one of us to-day, and we must face it. The words about Christ in our hymns, in our prayers, in our Creeds, are they our own words, beaten out in the fires of our own souls, coming out eager and passionate and really meant, with the zest of a personal discovery behind them; or are we just dully repeating what has been told us by other folk? What, in our religious life, are we founding on —mere hearsay, rumour blown down the centuries from Apostolic days, other men's thoughts of Jesus caught and put in cold storage and preserved and handed out to us—is that it? Or are we founding not on that, but on this—a Christ we have spoken to and can speak to daily, face to face and heart to heart; an experience of Jesus thrilling and throbbing and glorious because we can say of it, 'This is my own, my very own;' something that has come to us not on the authority of any Church, or the authority of any Creed, or the authority of our forefathers, or even on the authority of all the millions of believers that have ever lived, but on the authority of God and our own souls? 'Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?' Is it first-hand experience or second-hand tradition?

Some there are indeed who are quite content with a second-hand religion. And that for two reasons.

(1) For one thing, it is *safer*. You always know where you are with it. *It* will never sin against good form by breaking out with sudden enthusiasms. No. It is the visionary people who claim to have talked with God and seen Christ with their own eyes, it is they who have always been the real disturbers of this earth. 'Why can't they let us alone?' the world asks. Edward Gibbon in his youth had for his tutor that greatest of English mystics William Law. 'Had not Law's vigorous mind,' wrote Gibbon years afterwards, 'been clouded by enthusiasm, he might be ranked with the most agreeable writers of his time.' There speaks the man who had never seen Christ about the man who had. Chesterton pictures the Church 'rushing through the ages as the winged thunderbolt of an everlasting enthusiasm, a thing without rival or resemblance, and still as new as it is old.' Ah, but that is not what we want, say some: give us something quieter than that, less dangerous and disturbing and incalculable. So they settle down with their second-hand religion, quite content. It is safer.

(2) But another reason attracts them too. It is not only safer, it is also *easier*. 'I used to be concerned about religion,' said a foreign pro-

fessor to Henry Drummond once, 'but religion is a great subject, and I was busy, and there was little time to settle it for myself: so I became a Catholic, and instead of dabbling any longer in religion myself, just left it to the Church to do everything for me. Once a year I go to Mass.' Yes, it is easier dealing with Christ by proxy than dealing with Christ alone for yourself. It is ever so much easier.

But do you remember the cry which again and again in the Gospels was on Jesus' lips when there was a needy soul to be saved? 'Bring him hither to me!' Not, mark you, bring him to the theologians, not bring him to the creed-makers, not even bring him to the Church, but —'Bring him hither to *me*!' And I think that Paul, if he could see us taking our religion ready-made and accepting other men's beliefs and phrases as our own, Paul would want to shake us, and cry, as he once cried to the Corinthians, 'The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is'—where? In your dusty books? In your carefully analysed, neatly tabulated and ticketed documents? No! The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is 'on the face of Jesus Christ,' which means that the only way to know anything about God is to go and see Jesus for yourself. Walt Whitman was listening one night to an astronomer lecturing on the stars, and the hall was stuffy, and the lecture dull, and its charts and diagrams unilluminating, until, says Whitman, I could bear it no longer, and I rose and wandered out into the night and looked up at the stars themselves! But there are souls to-day—thousands of them—who have never thought of doing that, but stay inside poring over the charts and diagrams of religion, the mere mechanism of the faith, taking the whole thing second-hand and quite content with that. 'Men,' cries this New Testament, 'come out of those stuffy places, and look up with your own eyes, and see the bright and morning star!'

2. Again and again this Book drives it home to us that unless our religion is our own it is dead. 'I know whom I have believed,' cries St Paul, and sets that down as an impregnable rock in the midst of the swirling waves of the world's doubt—'I know!' And Peter in his Epistle breaks out hotly, 'It is no cunningly devised fable we are giving you, for we were eye-witnesses of Christ's majesty.' Best of all, there is St John. 'This thing that we are declaring unto you,' he writes in that great opening sentence of his Epistle, 'this Word of life—we heard it, saw and gazed upon it, yes, our own hands handled it!' There, he cries, are our credentials—eyes that have gazed into the eyes of Jesus, ears that have known the music of His blessed voice, hands, why, this hand of mine that you see here has clasped again and again the Hand that was pierced! Always it is a personal, immediate experience of Christ on which these men build their case.

And we want that too, don't we? There are three reasons why no sincere soul can rest satisfied with a second-hand religion.

(1) One is that there is always something *unreal* about a religion like that. You are repeating other men's words, and they don't ring true. You sing a hymn like—

> Jesus, Lover of my soul,
> Let me to Thy bosom fly,

and the rapture of it and the emotion make you vaguely uncomfortable. Voltaire was one day walking in Paris with a friend, when a religious procession passed them, carrying a crucifix, and Voltaire lifted his hat. 'What?' said his friend, amazed. 'Have you too found God?' 'Ah,' said Voltaire sadly and a little bitterly, 'we salute, but we do not speak.' Is not a good deal of religion to-day like that—men saluting the Cross but not speaking, acknowledging God's Christ but having no personal relationship with Him? That is one reason why no sincere soul can be satisfied with a second-hand religion—it is unreal.

(2) Another reason is that it is *insecure*. If it is not your own, it is always at the mercy of doubts. It is always liable to go to pieces on the hard facts of life. Tennyson indeed tells us that whenever his faith was assailed by doubts—

> A warmth within the breast would melt
> The freezing reason's colder part,
> And like a man in wrath the heart
> Stood up and answer'd 'I have felt.'

But what if that 'warmth within the breast' isn't there? What if a man has never 'felt' like that? Then the doubts have free course to go smashing their way through his soul! John Wesley had always thought he was a

model Christian, until one day when his ship was caught in a storm in the Atlantic and fear got hold of him. The only people on board, he noticed, who were not terror-stricken were a little group of Moravian missionaries. And when the storm abated, 'Were you not afraid?' Wesley asked one of them. 'Afraid?' said the Moravian. 'Why should I be afraid? I know Christ!' And then looking at Wesley with disconcerting frankness, 'Do *you* know Christ?' he asked. And at that Wesley for the first time in his life realized that he did not. When it comes to the day of trouble, a second-hand religion is always insecure.

(3) Here is the third reason why no sincere soul can be satisfied with a religion like that: it is *incomplete*. It always gives you the sense of something lacking. You think of the men who obviously have lived by the power of a first-hand Christ—how different they are, how radiant and sure, how unselfish and self-controlled and kingly! Why cannot we all learn their secret? Thomas Hardy one winter evening was walking in the fields, and the world was bleak and grey and shivery, everything dismal and dead, everything, his own heart included, wrapped in gloom; when suddenly from a tree above his head a thrush burst into song, a veritable carol of joy—and the poet stood still wondering.

> I could think there trembled through
> His happy good-night air
> Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
> And I was unaware.

Is not that how the men who have really seen Christ strike you, that they have discovered something that we perhaps are outside of still—

> Some blessed Hope, whereof they know
> And we are unaware?

Why can't we share it? Do you remember how it was when the young Goethe, just in his teens, first discovered Shakespeare, stumbled on that glory and music and art? 'I was one born blind,' he cries, 'who had suddenly been made to see! I rushed out into the open air, and felt as though for the first time I had hands and feet!' Would it not be a great thing some day to stumble on Christ like that? 'All the best part of experience,' wrote that fine spirit, C. E. Montague, 'consists in discovering that perfectly trite pieces of observation are shiningly and exhilaratingly true.' Think of our trite religious beliefs, the things that seem to us nowadays almost platitudinous, which we can hear and repeat without the faintest ghost of a thrill—true, yes, we accept them as true. But 'shiningly and exhilaratingly true'—that is what we need! Why, it would be like that picture that Robert Bridges in 'The Testament of Beauty' has given us—a room in a museum and the fossils on the shelves suddenly coming to life, a winter rose-bed in a garden 'bursting into crowded holiday of scent and bloom'! It would be like Thomas Chalmers in the manse of Kilmany, quite content to preach for years a cold, dry, formal religion—until one day the south winds of God blew upon his own heart, and from that hour he preached to save. 'Mathematician as I was,' he said, 'I had forgotten two magnitudes—the shortness of time and the vastness of eternity;' but Christ gripped him, and the dead gospel came alive, had hands and feet now, and a heart throbbing like the heart of Jesus! 'I had heard of thee,' cries Job, 'with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee!' And there is an old Psalmist who breaks out, 'Oh God, thou art *my* God!' What would we not give for a first-hand religion like that?

3. So we come finally to the practical question. How are we to get it? Jowett of Balliol indeed said we ought not to hope for it. We cannot, he said, 'feel such an attachment to Christ as is prescribed by Thomas à Kempis.' We cannot 'concentrate our thoughts upon a person scarcely known to us, who lived eighteen hundred years ago.' Jowett was never so wide of the mark as then.

But one thing is certain. Every one of us in this matter must stand alone. Even the saints cannot help. They have tried again and again to pass on their experience to others, to describe just what they have seen and felt in Christ; but always they come back to this, that the thing (as Paul puts it) is 'unspeakable,' it beats them, they just can't get it across. Browning in 'Rabbi ben Ezra,' speaks of

> Thoughts hardly to be packed
> Into a narrow act,
> Fancies that broke through language and escaped.

That is the experience of the saints in trying to tell what they have found in Jesus. 'We are just young children,' said Luther, describing the preachers of the Reformation, 'children learning to speak: we can only use half-words and quarter-words.' And St Bernard in his great hymn, after trying to tell us about it, throws down his pen at last in dismay:

Ah! this
Nor tongue nor pen can show;
The love of Jesus, what it is
None but His loved ones know.

It is as if you asked a man, What is a rainbow? and he replied with a complicated equation about the laws of the refraction of light. That a rainbow! What about the magic and glory of the thing, the ethereal wonder and poetry of it that make it a bridge for the angels? The Apostle Paul, in F. W. H. Myers' great poem, after trying to tell men about Christ, breaks out desperately—

Oh could I tell ye surely would believe it!
Oh could I only say what I have seen!
How should I tell or how can ye receive it,
How, till He bringeth you where I have been?

That is the heart of it: we shall never know till we have been where Paul has been, and stood where John has stood, and knelt where Mary Magdalene has knelt.

That is why there rings out again and again from these pages a cry—'Come and see!' 'Simon,' cried Andrew, breaking in on his brother one morning, 'I've found the Christ! I've found Him! I don't ask you to take it on my word—but come! Come and see!' And he took his brother's arm and led him to Jesus. The market-place at Samaria was drowsing one summer afternoon in the sun, and the groups round the stalls were idle, when suddenly an excited, dishevelled creature came running down the road from the well. 'Come,' she said, 'see a man that told me all I ever did—is not this the Christ?' And, wondering greatly and half-doubting, they went. But that night when they were back they said to her—'Now we believe, not because you told us: for we have heard and seen Him ourselves, and know that this is the Saviour of the world!'

Yes, somehow we have to get where Andrew was, and Peter, and those Samaritans—as near Christ as that.

But how? I don't know how it is ever to be done except by obeying two simple maxims:—

The one is—*keep following*. You say you have never really touched Christ yet, never really looked into His eyes. Ah, but at least you do know the road He is travelling on! Well, keep to that. It is the road of His moral ideal; and whatever else may be dark in your religion, this at least is clear, that the purity Jesus stands for, the honour, the manliness, the love, that all that is far more worth having than any of the allurements of the world. Well then, get your feet on to that road, for it is down that road somewhere that Jesus is always to be found, and no one who has sought Him there has ever failed to find Him. Therefore, keep following.

And here is the other thing—*keep praying*. Often men tell you they don't pray because Christ is not real to them: the truth of the matter is, Christ is not real to them because they don't pray. To the man who never prays God in Christ cannot make Himself real. But to the man who prays habitually (not only when he feels like it—that is one of the snares of religion—but also when he does not feel like it, in the dry and barren seasons) to the man who keeps praying then, Christ is sure to make Himself real, sure to become the biggest fact in life, filling the whole horizon. How do I know? It is guaranteed on the word of Christ Himself. For listen. 'If any man open the door, I will come in to him.' It is prayer that unlocks the door. And, says Jesus, I will come in! I promise it. There are souls to-day who are eager to pass from hearsay to experience, eager to see Christ for themselves. But is that door unlocked? Has prayer swung it wide? What about starting to pull the bolts back now? They're stiff and rusty maybe through long disuse, but still, if you really mean it, they will move. And then the door will be open, and then—why, then, 'even so, come, Lord Jesus!'

J. S. Stewart.

A Vital Question

John xviii. 38.—'Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?'

1. In what spirit did Pilate ask this question? More than one view of Pilate's spirit and temper has been taken. Perhaps the most familiar interpretation is that given by Bacon in his essay on 'Truth,' where the first sentence runs thus: 'What is truth? said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer.' '*Jesting* Pilate!' says Bacon, but Pilate at this particular moment was in no mood for jesting. All the elements of tragedy were present, tragedy for Jesus and tragedy for himself. He saw cruel priests hounding an innocent man to death. He realized that they were trying to compel him to become the instrument of the foul murder they were contemplating. With all his faults Pilate had the instinctive sense of justice so characteristic of the Romans. And he hated to be bullied and browbeaten into a crime he loathed. His feelings at this moment, if we are to guess at them, were feelings of burning indignation against the priests, mingled, perhaps, with a certain bitter and half-contemptuous pity for himself for allowing himself to be frightened by them at all. Whatever else this question may have been, it certainly was not a jest.

There are others who take the view that the question is the agonized cry of a man who longed for the truth above everything else. But this view is as unlikely as the other: 'There is nothing of real reverence or seriousness in his words, still less of awe,' says Westcott. And the proof of that is that he did not stay for an answer. Jesus had just told him in almost as many words that the truth was in His keeping, that He had come into the world to answer those very questions concerning 'truth' which for generations had occupied the minds of serious men! Did He not in that last sentence, 'Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice,' almost invite Pilate to ask Him questions concerning that 'truth,' He had come to reveal? Can we conceive of a really earnest man neglecting to probe into the matter a little further and to find out whether Jesus had any real light to give on those great problems which were vexing men's souls? No! however disposed we may be to take a favourable view of Pilate's character, we cannot represent him as a seeker after truth.

The truth about Pilate lies midway between these two interpretations. He asked the question, 'What is truth?' half sadly, half cynically. As if he would say, 'What is the use of talking about truth? If there is any such thing it is unattainable, and in searching for it men are following a mere will-o'-the-wisp.' 'It is the expression,' Godet says, 'of a frivolous scepticism such as is frequently met with in the man of the world and especially in the statesman.' Shall we not rather say that it is the expression of a sad and bitter scepticism? Long ago Pilate had shared in the speculation of the time; no educated man could escape it. Sect after sect had claimed to tell the truth, and men had found nothing to satisfy them, no ground on which to rest, till at last, in weary carelessness, Pilate, like hundreds, had hushed the cry of his heart for truth and become absorbed in the things of the world. Pilate was an agnostic, and it is the cynical, disillusioned temper of the agnostic that breathes in this question, 'What is truth?'

But, whatever the spirit in which Pilate asked it, the question itself is the most critical and vital that man can ask. All the intellectual unrest and ferment of our day are just the evidence of men's quest for the truth. And the truth they are in search of is *ultimate truth*. It is not a matter of historical or scientific truth. Both these spheres are open to the inquiring intellect of man and the truth will be gradually brought to light. But this is not the truth that answers the clamorous questions of the soul. What is of vital importance for man to know is whether there is a God, what sort of a God He is, what are His feelings towards mankind. It is of vital importance for him to know whether he is a creature of time or an heir of eternity, whether he has these few brief years and nothing more, or whether he has 'for ever.'

2. The intellect cannot give any full and satisfying answer to this question, 'What is truth?' It cannot meet the imperious challenges of the soul. But what man cannot discuss God may reveal. And it was for revelation as well as redemption that God sent His Son. All the truth we require to know is in Him. He not only bears witness to the truth but He Himself *is* the truth. We have

no right to set Jesus up as a final authority upon history and science. He claimed no supremacy in those spheres. Very likely, so far as history and science went, He shared in the ideas of His time, and spoke the language of His time. It is within the sphere of religion that Christ is authoritative. It is upon the great questions of God and the soul, of life and death, that His word is final. He revealed the truth in His words. He was the truth in His life.

(1) *Christ is the Truth about God.*—Perhaps that is the 'truth' men most eagerly and passionately desire to know; not so much about God's existence—for in spite of all difficulties and doubts, belief in God is instinctive and practically universal—as about His nature. Israel had found out the basal truth about God that He was righteous and holy. But to think of God simply as righteous and holy left Him chill and cold and forbidding as some snowclad Alpine peak. Christ clothed God's righteousness and holiness with tenderness and love, so that He became warm and gracious like that same snowclad peak when suffused with the crimson afterglow. That was the truth about God which Jesus taught—not only that He was holy, but that He was merciful. The name by which He taught men to call Him was that gracious name Father. And His attitude towards men, He said, was that of forgiving love. He taught all that in the exquisite story of the welcome the father gave to the returning prodigal. But it is in Christ's life even more than His words that that truth stands declared.

¶ The highest, as Goethe said, cannot be spoken. It can only be seen and realized and done. The artist sees it, and he tells us what he has seen in what he makes. The artist in living sees it, and he tells us what he has seen by what he is. And Jesus in His life, and supremely by the final gesture of His death, revealed to the world the God He knew.[1]

The stately ideas of philosophy may exalt or amaze, but they do not touch the heart or give the inward sustaining needed in an hour of moral anguish; much less break the awful loneliness in which each soul lives. Devotion dies in the presence of the Infinities and Eternities of Carlyle; no one can pray to a Force. But when we see the glory of God revealed in the merciful face of Christ, made known in all He said and did and was here below, the Eternal is brought so near that we can grasp a Hand in the dark, and the fountain of prayer wells up where before there was a desert of arid speculation. Jesus does make God living, loving, personal, and at His touch life is lifted into a realm of personal fellowship, moral obligations, and spiritual values.

¶ Kagawa, the great Christian social reformer of Japan writes: 'I feel that outside of Christ there is no complete revelation of God. The best sign that has come from God is Christ. In the same way as the messages are broadcast over the radio, I have received the love of Christ as a radio-message from God. As we see Christ we can understand that God is love. Even though we should become lepers, or consumptive, we may receive this call, "Long distance: God is broadcasting!" Everyone understanding the spirit of Christ comes into contact with this love, which is thus broadcast. *There is no other way to know the love of God except through Christ.*'[1]

(2) *Christ is the Truth about Man.*—Christianity not only furnishes us with the highest and most perfect thought conceivable of God and of His providence, but it also gives us the best idea of the nature and duty of man. It is unique in its perfect thought of God. It is superlative in its idea of man. Neither science, nor art, nor philosophy, nor poetry can improve in any degree upon the revelation of Jesus Christ as to the nature and destiny of man. The best history of the world for nearly two thousand years is the story of human effort to grasp that revelation and grow up into it. It is the religion of humanity in a sense in which no other cult can be regarded. Look at mankind from any standpoint that you choose, and there is no other idea that is at all comparable in clearness, fullness, and beauty with the conception of Jesus as to man in his relation to God and to his fellows. It lies at the basis of life in the individual, the family, the church, and the nation. That God is our Father is the highest thought to which we can hope to attain; and that we are His sons, heirs and joint-heirs with Christ, is a correlative truth not to be surpassed in worth and significance. Jesus discerned in every soul, even the worst, a God-related element, on the ground of which every

[1] F. R. Barry.

[1] Toyohiko Kagawa, *New Life Through God*, 93.

sinner under heaven can say, 'I will arise and go to my Father.'

¶ 'I want none of your metaphysical abstractions,' said Niebuhr, the historian. 'I want God heart to heart with me;' and it is God heart to heart with all men that is revealed in Christ's doctrine of sonship.

¶ Dr Major, the editor of the *Modern Churchman*, writing on 'The Dynamic of the Incarnation,' refers to 'the wonderful glory of the Gospel, the mystery of the Divine love which it enshrined, that man through Christ might indeed share His Sonship to God.' 'Let us admit,' he says, 'that such a thought is hard to grasp; the imagination droops before it: to man conscious of weakness and guilt, burdened with animal desires and limited knowledge, it will seem incredible. The Universe is so vast: God, its originating and directive Creator, is so mighty, so inaccessible, so incomprehensible, men can never be His sons. The thought that they can be is only a piece of monstrous human egoism and self-conceit.'

'There is a story,' Dr Major proceeds, 'told of a missionary in India who was translating the First Epistle of St John with the help of his Brahmin teacher. He asked the Indian to translate the first verse of the third chapter, and, when the latter brought it, he noticed that it was changed. "Surely," he said, "you have not translated it rightly." "No, Sahib," the Brahmin answered, "I have changed it," and added, "Sahib, what the book says cannot possibly be true—*children of God*—that cannot be true. I have put there what may be true. . . . *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be permitted to kiss His feet.*"'

'It is only the thought,' adds Dr Major, 'that God is Eternal Love which makes the message credible, and even then it is not intellectually but spiritually discerned.'[1]

(3) *Christ is the Truth about the Life Beyond.*—It was no bare, cold immortality; but something more real, more radiant—the power of an eternal life—by which Christianity won its morning victory. Then, as now, men everywhere were craving for a new power of Divine grace, a new and haunting kind of righteousness, and a more vivid religious faith and hope. Into that time of stress and hazard, when an old form of civilization was dying and another was coming to birth, it was the Christian vision of Eternal Life that gave relief and renewal. It unites two profound insights, in response to the deepest needs of the soul. To go no further back than Plotinus, one view insists on the Eternal Life as something which we can enter into and experience in this life. It is a timeless life, exempt from flux and mutation; and yet this truth, taken alone, is unsatisfying, in that it leaves no room for movement, no sense of advance, of 'the glory of going on.' Hence the opposite view of Eternal Life as a state, if not a place, beyond, to which we look forward as the fulfilment of aspiration.

Here again Jesus is the Truth in its depth, sanity and fullness, in which Eternal Life is both a present possession and a future realization. Even a casual student of His teaching knows what emphasis He laid upon the great emancipating truth of eternal life as an experience in time. Yet He speaks of going to prepare a 'place' for His followers. Eternal Life with Him is both a rich possession and a radiant anticipation, and the equal presence of these two elements, held in balance, gave His vision its completeness and finality. It is life in God, eternal in quality but growing in stability and power, and he who knows its secret will face life and death unafraid,

> Gazing beyond all perishable fears
> To some diviner goal
> Beyond the waste of years.

3. 'What is truth?' said Pilate. And if he had been in earnest he had the chance just then of learning the truth about God and the soul and the beyond—those tremendous questions which all down the ages have perplexed and harassed men's hearts. And that is Pilate's condemnation: he did not wait for an answer; the truth was not a matter of vital concern to him. He did not hear Christ's voice because he was not 'of the truth.' For the honest and candid soul recognizes 'the truth' as Jesus declares it. The book in which G. J. Romanes announced his surrender of Christianity was entitled *A Candid Examination of Theism.* That word 'candid' accounts for all that happened afterwards. The man of 'candid' mind is the honest man who loves truth above everything else. It is no wonder that at the last G. J. Romanes came round full circle and

[1] *The Modern Churchman*, January 1927, p. 570.

found his rest in Jesus. 'Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.' When Jesus utters His truth, there is a swift recognition and a response in the heart of every lover of the truth. It is as with the famous Memnon statue at Thebes. It was called the vocal Memnon, for this reason, that a note, a sort of chord, was emitted by the statue when the rays of the morning sun smote it. So when the sun of righteousness rises upon the heart, there is a response swift and immediate from every one who is 'of the truth.' For there is a self-evidencing power about truth, and the truth as it is in Jesus at once commends itself to the honest heart. It meets the need. It gives 'rest to the soul.'

A Crown of Thorns

John xix. 2.—'And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head.'

The crown of thorns was twisted together by the rough hands of some of Pilate's soldiers, and pressed upon Christ's brow. It was a piece of cruel sport on the part of a few barrack-room jesters. It gave half an hour's merriment to a party of men in whom the finer sensibilities were wanting. We will not sit in judgment upon them. We cannot; for wanton cruelty is not a thing of the past. The weak and the defenceless have still at times to be the butt of their stronger neighbours. There are flippancies that sting; smart sayings that draw blood; sarcasms that make rankling wounds. The point of a joke is sometimes a cruelly sharp one. People will have their snatch of pleasure, no matter who has to suffer for it, no matter how long that suffering may last. Still there are those whose hands are so hard that they can weave thorns without pricking themselves; and it scarcely occurs to them to think that others may be more delicately sensitive. There are those who, if only they had eyes to see, might catch a glimpse of themselves in that rough soldier-band; and one look like that would mean a tenderer way of speech and deed through all their after-life.

¶ A grandson of the late Rev. Dr Primrose (of Wakefield, vicar), wrote me a little note from his country living this morning, and the kind fellow had the precaution to write 'No thorn' upon the envelope, so that ere I broke the seal, my mind might be relieved of any anxiety lest the letter should contain one of those lurking stabs which are so painful to the present gentle writer.[1]

'A crown of thorns.' Of all the crowns that men have worn, this is the one that will be longest remembered, most widely known, and most reverently honoured. It represents the highest kingship that the world can know—even the kingship of suffering and of self-sacrifice. That scene in the common hall was vastly more than a bit of horseplay on the part of a few Roman soldiers. It was the coronation of the King of Sorrows. As Owen Meredith sings:

It was a thorn,
And it stood forlorn
In the burning sunrise land:
A blighted thorn
And at even and morn
Thus it sighed to the desert sand:

Every flower,
By its beauty's power,
With a crown of glory is crowned;
No crown have I;
For a crown I sigh,
For a crown that I have not found.

Sad thorn, why grieve?
Thou a crown shalt weave,
But not for a maiden to wear;
That crown shall shine
When all crowns save thine
With the glory they gave are gone.

For thorn, my thorn,
Thy crown shall be worn
By the King of Sorrows alone.

Christ sought this crown of thorns. He came to wear it, and He would have no other. After the miracle of the loaves the people would have crowned Him with an earthly crown, and He fled from them. They wanted to give Him an honour He could not accept. There was a crown waiting for Him, and He would not be defrauded of it. There was a coronation day coming, and it must not be anticipated. He was going by a path that few would be willing to follow—to an honour that few would be wishful to win. He chose between the crown

[1] Thackeray, *Roundabout Papers*.

that glitters and the crown that wounds. He refused the one that He might wear the other.

'A crown of thorns.' How these words should still the murmuring of our lips and the resentful petulance of our spirits! We cannot live without the breath of praise. We are always trying to snatch at our reward. It is almost a tragedy that we are undervalued or misunderstood. We want good words, good opinions, swiftly accorded recognition. We cannot bear the most momentary opposition. The sharp and thorny difficulties or resistances have no place in our philosophy of service. They anger us, confuse us, dishearten us. We do not understand that the word that life speaks to the faithful is always a hard word. We remember that our Master was crowned; we forget *how* He was crowned. We would be His servants—saving the thorns. There is a clause of selfishness in the bond of our service. We would spare ourselves. We feel every little slight, every affront, and as for 'the long self-sacrifice of life,' we love softness too dearly to make it. We shrink from life's little pains, because we have not opened our hearts willingly to its great and precious pain—even the pain of full surrender, in bearing of which there is great reward. Some one has said, 'He that hath thrown the devil and all his angels can afford to be at peace with a meaner antagonist.' And surely it is equally true that he who has taken life service with the King of Sorrows, he who has pledged undying allegiance to the diadem of thorns, can afford to bear patiently with the sharp rebuffs, the unsympathetic dealings, the painful handling, of a world that has not yet learned the kingship of suffering and the victory of patient brotherly love.

¶ Jesus hath now many lovers of His heavenly kingdom, but few bearers of His Cross.

He hath many desirous of consolation, but few of tribulation.

He findeth many companions of His table, but few of His abstinence.

All desire to rejoice with Him, few are willing to endure anything for Him, or with Him.

Many love Jesus so long as no adversities befall them.

Many praise and bless Him, so long as they receive any consolations from Him.

But they who love Jesus for the sake of Jesus, and not for some special comfort of their own, bless Him in all tribulation and anguish of heart.[1]

'A crown of thorns.' Can we not lay our sorrows at the feet of this sad and wounded King? It is not in the court of every monarch that sad faces and sad hearts are welcome. But the court of this King is not as the courts of other kings, even as His crown is not as their crowns. No one is ever refused entrance and audience if the word grief be found written in his passport. There are more sad ones than smiling ones in His presence-chamber. Yea, and the weariest, the loneliest, the most broken-hearted of all, are placed nearest the foot of the throne. And if we ask the men and women who are paying their homage, 'What brings you here?' they will nearly all give the same answer: 'I have had trouble.' The crown of thorns is the guarantee of sympathy, the pledge of Divine consolation.

'A crown of thorns.' This gives a new meaning to sin. It was the world's sin that sharpened those thorns. All sin spells suffering, and the Sinless One could not bear our sins without bearing the awful sharpness of them. There is no wrong-doing that does not hurt the doer; and worse still, there is no wrong-doing that does not injure some other life; and worst of all, there is no sin that does not press the thorns more heavily upon the Saviour's brow. It is an ill thing to look at our sins in the light of the law—it is an agony to see them in the light of the infinite love.

There is no sin, no secret, unrelated, socially isolated sin that does not wound the Christ who died for us. There is no secret thought of ill, no slightest departure from the path of high and sensitive morality, no brief and unrecorded despite done to our spiritual ideal, that does not add something to the sorrow of the Divine Heart.

Lord, I have left Thee, I have denied,
Followed the world in my selfish pride;
Lord, I have joined in the hateful cry,—
Slay Him, away with Him, crucify!
Lord, I have done it, oh ask me not how,
Woven the thorns for Thy tortured brow;
Yet in His pity so boundless and free,
Jesus the crucified pleads for me!

[1] Thomas à Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ.*

The Cosmic Christ

John xix. 9.—'Whence art thou?'

1. 'We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. When Pilate therefore heard this saying, he was the more afraid.' He had been afraid before, though up to this point John has not referred to his fear. But at this point the fear became patent and obvious. It was not fear of the priests or of the howling mob, but of his helpless prisoner. There was something wonderful and mysterious about Jesus. What Godet calls 'a dreadful presentiment' had been forming within Pilate all morning. It had been deepened and strengthened by the speech he had with Jesus, and the climax came when the priests charged Him with claiming to be the Son of God. The priests meant to imply that it was a false claim, but what made Pilate 'the more afraid' was the feeling that the claim might be a true one. It gave the fears which had haunted him all the morning new and alarming shape. What if this strange person were really a son of the gods?

¶ 'A Roman,' Bishop Westcott says, 'would have no distinct idea of One to whom alone the title "Son of God," truly belongs.' But with the idea of 'sons of the gods,' divine beings appearing on earth in human form, Pilate would be perfectly familiar. In the books which he read in school, in the poems which he read after he grew up, there were numerous stories of how gods came to earth in the likeness of men. Zeus, Hercules, Apollo, they had all, according to the legends, taken human shape. Pilate, sceptic as he was, had dismissed these ancient stories as being mere legends. But these old stories came back to him now, and in the presence of Jesus they somehow did not seem impossible.

So once again Pilate took Jesus within the palace, and there in awe-struck tones he asked the question of the text: 'Whence art thou?'

2. Pilate was not the only one who asked questions when confronted with Jesus. His words, His works and His character were a challenge to all who came into contact with Him. Here is a man who uses the vocabulary of God and uses it with perfect naturalness. He says things that no man ought to say and which no other man has ever said. We hear Him say: 'I am meek and lowly in heart,' and yet we also hear Him say: 'I and my Father are one,' 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' We hear Him say: 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' We hear Him speak as if all judgment had been committed into His hands, and He paints a picture of the judgment day in which He Himself will part the sons of men as a shepherd parts the sheep from the goats. 'All power hath been committed unto me in heaven and in earth.' It is language that nobody else ever used, or ever dreamed of using. To appreciate the force of Jesus' words we have to imagine them coming from the lips of some other. Had any other spoken as He did his own words would have been his undoing, and yet He says these things with perfect naturalness and with exquisite balance of character.

¶ Mrs Humphry Ward in her *Recollections* tells how in the later 'seventies she met Walter Pater at Oxford, and, reckoning on his sympathy, said that orthodox Christianity 'could not long maintain itself against its assailants, and that we should live to see its breakdown.' He shook his head and looked rather troubled. 'I don't think so,' he said. Then, with hesitation: 'And we don't altogether agree. You think it's all plain. But I can't. There are such mysterious things. Take that saying, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden." How can you explain that? There is a mystery in it—something supernatural.'

Jesus is never taken by surprise. He is never less than adequate for anything that life brings Him. His mind is always clear and sane and balanced and alert. There is no trace in His conduct of extravagance that would seem to match His words. Never for a moment is He deceived by the clamorous praise of the people, or shaken or shamed by their scorn or their hate. He endures the most hideous and shameful kind of death there was in the world, and makes it a thing of glory and a symbol of salvation. He is always self-controlled, simple in His tastes, asking nothing of the world but that He might complete His mission.

And the things that He says, too, are not popular things. They were so searching in their character that they aroused enough hate and resentment among His contemporaries to bring about His death. All through the centuries they have been of a quality that has antagonized and challenged men; things that we have

denied in our secret thought and in our social and personal practice, impossible things, yet perfectly sane and resistlessly challenging.

He is so uncompromising also in His demands upon men. We might read the Sermon on the Mount, rejoicing in its exquisite beauty and in its naïve simplicity, but before we have gone far it has touched our conscience and made us feel uncomfortable. He pours scorn upon our lust for wealth and power. He insists that we shall forgive when our hearts are rankling with resentment, and He meets even our offered discipleship by demanding that we shall bear a cross.

There is only one view of Christ that stands the test of the centuries; it is the cosmic view. If He be merely localized there in Palestine, if He be denied pre-existence and eternal persistence, then we have the most amazing and incredible complex the world has ever seen, and no man yet has ever credibly explained it.

3. All through the New Testament, if we read it carefully, we find rather different theories about the Person of Christ, tentative theories, tried and then given up as inadequate. But when we come to the author of the Fourth Gospel, we find the doctrine of the Person of Christ substantially fixed as the Church has taught it ever since.

From the beginning, before the world was, the Logos or Word, a fully Divine Being, was with God. He was the Agent in creation and He is the Sustainer of the world in being. He is the Life of all that lives; He is the Light of all that shines. This Divine Being, who had been in the world as its life and light from the first, became flesh at an historical moment, when the fullness of the time was come, and tabernacled among us. The object of the Incarnation was not to change anything in the counsels of God, but to reveal the nature of God as Life and Light, and above all as Love. After voluntarily submitting to the sufferings which were necessary to make this revelation complete, He laid down His life and took it again, as One to whose power there are no limits which are not self-imposed. His work on earth done, He returned to the position of glory which had always been His. No accession of dignity could accrue to One who had been God from all eternity. In departing, Christ bequeathed to His disciples, to the Church, the spiritual presence of the Paraclete or Comforter, who is really Himself under another mode, to abide with them for ever, and to teach them all things as they should be able to receive their meaning.

For us moderns this doctrine has the immense advantage of enabling us to put the gospel narrative within the frame of an evolutionary world such as we are compelled to think of. For consider. The Word or the Logos is the Agent in creation. Without Him, as St John says, was not anything made. Do the astronomers ask for a million years? He is eternal, and so His world, His creation, may even be perpetual, if science decides that way. Are there perhaps any living beings needing redemption in other planets, perhaps in other stellar systems? He is equally present everywhere, so there is no difficulty there. Was the Incarnation a catastrophic intervention of the supernatural into the natural order? Hardly so; for He, the Logos, the Word, had been the Light of the world, immanent in the world from the first. Did He quit the world and go back to some other locality after the Ascension? No: 'I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you; when the Comforter is come, He will abide with you for ever.' [1]

4. Jesus stands as the champion and guarantor of a certain outlook upon life and the universe that involves the love of God. 'Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world,' was the declaration of His own sublime faith. The foundation is not laid until the coping-stone is thought of. The completed plan precedes the turning of the first sod. However long the process and however strange and stern the battle, if the universe was conceived in love it will be consummated in love.

That is the distinctly Christian view of the world, a view that is very much needed in these days. The only philosophy that is sane and manifests its sanity by its fruits is the philosophy for which Jesus of Nazareth stands, the philosophy of the love of God, of the great Being who is the Father of men, who set up a cross on Calvary because there was a cross already in His heart, in whose purposes it was not merely a localized and specialized thing, but the out-flowering as it were of a principle that runs right through His universe, who made His highest and holiest to take the figure of a man and speak to us with

[1] W. R. Inge.

a man's voice out of the midst of a man's experience.

Conceived of originally by His own handful of disciples merely in terms of the Messiah of the Jews, conceived of often enough within the compass of clumsy or dogmatic theories, conceived of as the Saviour only of the elect, conceived of as the Saviour of privileged classes, conceived of as the white man's Saviour over against the black man's idols—all these successive limitations He breaks through and becomes more and more in the eyes of men the world Christ, the out-flowering of the universe, the symbol of its inner meaning, the undying challenge to men and women to shape their lives upon the principle of a sure love that underlies all things, that woos us away from our greed and our lusts, and makes us to open our hearts yet more and more to the sway of His spirit—the Christ of God, whom the Father loved before the foundation of the world, and in whom His purposes will be completed and vindicated. And yet the Christ who stands in the midst of us, our great Companion, our great Exemplar.

¶ Looking into my own heart, which is perhaps the best way of looking into other men's, I know that the Saviour I want is one of whom I can say with Thomas of old: 'My Lord and my God.' It would not suffice for my need that He should be only an heroic brother man Divinely inspired. I owe Him my soul; He fills my whole spiritual horizon; I seek to lose myself in Him that I may find myself eternally in life and love Divine.[1]

[1] R. J. Campbell.

THE VISION OF THE KING

John xix. 14.—'And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour; and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!'

It was an April morning in Jerusalem, and the city was thronged with pilgrims to the Feast. From all over the land, and from distant lands, the Jews had come in multitudes to celebrate again the Divine deliverance from Egypt and the birth of their nation as the chosen people of God. At such a time religious fervour ran high, and was even intensified by the fact that the holy land was now under the heel of Rome. Ancient hopes were more warmly cherished, ancient promises were more eagerly rehearsed of the coming of God's King, whose name should be 'Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace.' Each of these great names stirred men's hearts like the sound of trumpets and the roll of drums. And now, on this April morning of the feast, there is gathered in front of the Roman governor's palace a raging mob, and before them stands one of their own race, robed in purple and crowned with thorns, and to him the governor points in mockery saying, 'Behold your King!' It is perhaps little to be wondered at that such a travesty, such a flouting of their most sacred hopes, roused the Jews to fury and to the horrible cry, 'Away with him!'

Browning, in one of his poems, paints a heavenly sunset shedding its radiance over a city where in the market-place the people are gathered, blind with hate and drunk with the lust of war. Only

> A single eye
> From all Verona cared for the soft sky.[1]

Even so, on that April morning in Jerusalem, only a single eye in all the multitude had discernment to see the vision of the thorn-crowned King. John, the beloved disciple, was there, and Pilate's words struck a strange chord in his heart. Beneath the mockery they seemed to him the expression of eternal truth. 'Behold your King!' When the words fell on his ear, then from the depth of his soul he responded, 'Yea, I behold and confess my King.'

And so, most strangely, through St John's record Pilate comes before us as the herald of Christ. In the words of Matthew Henry, 'Pilate, though he was far from meaning so, seems as if he were the voice of God to them. Christ, now crowned with thorns, is here, as a king at his coronation, offered to the people.' It cannot but be felt to be a most significant thing that the Roman governor, the representative of world power, should be seen pointing to

[1] *Sordello*, Bk. i.

Jesus and announcing Him to be a King. Men have often uttered words which were truer than they knew, and had meanings far other than they dreamed. So was it when the Roman governor uttered the words, 'Behold your King!' We do well to give heed to them, and ponder their deepest meaning that we also, with St John, may be led to see the vision of our King. Pilate had previously uttered another memorable word, 'Ecce Homo, Behold the Man.' That is the word which, perhaps above any other, has caught the ear and imagination of our age. Jesus, the ideal man, the representative of humanity at its best—that is a vision which has captivated many hearts. But Christian faith implies something more Divine and at the same time more personal. Jesus is not merely the human ideal; He is our heavenly King. And to this end Pilate's words are recorded, and all the Gospels are written, that we through them may be led to see the Vision of our King.

I

Veiled

That vision is veiled from the eyes of the world. Theologians of the school of Barth speak of Jesus as 'the Great Incognito.' It belongs to the very nature of the Incarnation that it should be a disguise. He who is God chooses to become an individual man. 'This is the deepest incognito or the most impenetrable state of non-recognition that is possible.' There is obviously truth in that. Not by the natural eye could the Divine glory which was in Jesus be discerned. So it came to pass, as St John says, that 'He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own and his own received him not.' They were in perplexity about Him. 'How long dost thou make us to doubt? Tell us plainly.' The Jews of our Lord's day would certainly have spoken of Him, like the Jew in Browning's poem,[1] as one

> who at mid-watch came,
> By the starlight, naming a dubious name.

It must be allowed that by every earthly standard, if Jesus was a king, He was a king in disguise. There was nothing about Him of the pomp and majesty of kings. His humble parentage, His lowly birth, the long years of toil in Nazareth, His life as a wandering teacher with nowhere to lay His head—these all were in no wise suggestive of kingly dignity, so that to the rulers in Jerusalem He appeared but a poor, unlettered Galilean. Still, all that would not have been decisive, for some of the greatest of earthly kings have been of humble origin, and have known years of hardship before they came to their kingdom. King David himself was of that number, and the people of Galilee were at one time ready to set Jesus on the throne of David.

It was His passion and death which finally veiled from the world His Kingship. When He was despised and rejected of men, when He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, when He was spit upon and buffeted, when He was arrayed in a mockery of royal robes, crowned with thorns and crucified, who could see in all that any vestige or sign of kingship? Certainly not the crowd in Jerusalem on that April morning of the feast. This was not the kind of king they had expected or desired. 'This the Messiah, the Hope of Israel, the Prince of the house of David, the Saviour of His people—unthinkable, away with Him!' It seemed, indeed, enough to quench the faith of His most enthusiastic follower, and to put an end forever to His claim to be a King.

Yet it was here that He claimed most explicitly to be a King and proved most fully His kingly power. He who had rejected the wild and fervent loyalty of the Galileans, now in the hour of His humiliation claimed His rightful title at Pilate's judgment bar. He made the Cross His throne. 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.' And so it has come to pass. In the words of Richter, He 'has lifted up with His pierced hand empires off their hinges, has turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages.' Multitudes, like St John, have seen the glory that shines through His humiliation, and have hailed Him as their King when they beheld Him enthroned upon the Cross. The strange testimony of Napoleon has frequently been quoted. Contrasting the great empires which have been founded in the world upon force, he said, 'Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this day millions would die for Him.'

[1] *Holy-Cross Day.*

II

Discerned

The vision is discerned only by the eye of faith. That faith 'which is the evidence of things not seen' penetrates the disguise and beholds in the thorn-crowned One the King.

(1) Faith discerns Him to be King by Divine right. He is the Lord of Glory, the only begotten Son of God dwelling in the bosom of the Father, the eternal Word by whom the world was made, and by whom the world shall be judged. Such is the full Christian faith which the Church has found to be alone adequate to express the glory of His being. It did not spring into life at the first; it came by a process of inevitable growth. Doubtless the disciples felt from the beginning that through Him they were in touch with God, and simple hearts were joyfully content with that, as they had every right to be. But there were others of more profound and inquiring mind who, being guided and inspired as we believe by the Divine Spirit, were enabled to penetrate deeper into the mystery, and give noble expression in human words to the ineffable glory of the Son of God. And so we, pondering all that Jesus was and did while among men, the wonder of His person and the permanence of His influence, may well believe those things about Him of which we can as yet have no proof, and join with the Church universal in confessing Him to be God incarnate.

(2) But, in the actual experience of faith, He is first of all King by right of redemption. The most heroic and best beloved of kings have not been those who were born to the purple and ascended an easy throne, but those who have delivered their country from bondage, and have been crowned by an emancipated and grateful people. Even so Jesus came to redeem a world in the bondage of sin, and He is King because, first of all, He is the Redeemer.

Now there are many in our time who willingly do homage to Him for the beauty of His teaching and the perfection of His life. They find in Him the supreme moral ideal to which every true man must bow, for, as Tennyson says,

> We needs must love the highest when we see it.

They acclaim Jesus as king in the realm of conduct, much as they might acclaim Shakespeare king in the realm of poetry, or Plato king in the realm of philosophic thought. Let it be cordially granted that their instinct is true so far as it goes. None would despise it or belittle the ennobling influence it has had upon many minds. It is at least a partial vision of the King, and we rejoice in every such tribute that is paid.

But the eye of faith discerns much more than this. It sees in Him a Redeemer-King. The cross is His true throne. He took upon Him the sin of the world. He fought the fight for man's salvation, and won the day. For this reason 'God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father.' For the same reason He is acclaimed King by His redeemed people. As the Romans on the field of battle were wont to salute their victorious general with the royal title of Imperator, so do Christ's people hail their King upon the Cross. Only when the meaning of that cruel death is understood, and the love which inspired it lays hold upon the heart, is Jesus rightly discerned as King. When St John had his apocalyptic vision of the eternal city it was 'a lamb as it had been slain' that he saw in the midst of the throne of God, and the triumph song which he heard from the myriad voices of the redeemed was, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. . . . For thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.'

III

Obeyed

Now this Vision is no idle dream, but it lays hold on the heart and becomes a powerful impulse to action. When St Paul met the crucified and risen Lord on the way to Damascus he was gripped, subdued, and inspired. 'I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision,' he said, and truly for him the Vision made all things new. So the Vision commands our obedience. If the Lamb slain is in the midst of the throne of God, what is His will for the world? If the crucified One is King, what does He require of us?

(1) Surely, first of all, He requires of us that we crown Him *our* King. His relation to each of us is a personal relation, even as His redemption of us is an individual and a personal thing. He has won the right to reign over us. This is what all the apostles feel and urge upon Christian people so insistently. 'Ye are not your own,' they are continually saying. 'Ye are bought with a price.' And what a price! 'Not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ.' They never lose the feeling that they are emancipated slaves, once held in cruel bondage, but now happily set free. What else could they do, therefore, but gladly give their lives in utter devotion to Him who had loved them and given Himself up for them?

This is what they press upon us, as the only adequate response to the Vision of the King, that we each of us own His sway and enthrone Him as Lord in heart and mind and will. It is an absolute surrender which Christ requires. He claims to be more to each one of us than father or mother, more than son or daughter, more even than life itself. He claims not only to regulate our outward conduct, but to reign over the whole world of our inner life. Our wills are to be subdued to His will, every thought is to be brought into captivity to His obedience. Nothing could justify such a claim except the infinite obligation under which He has put us all. But He stands before us thorn-crowned and stretches out pierced hands, and when in silence He seems to ask nothing, then it is that He most powerfully appeals. The believing heart is strangely moved at the sight.

> In my place condemned He stood,
> Sealed my pardon with His blood.

When that is understood then all His amazing demands are gladly met and He is joyfully hailed as King.

(2) Then, following upon that, He requires of us that we 'crown Him Lord of all,' that we make it our declared and definite aim to bring the nations to His obedience. He has the best right to reign over them, and the world will never be at peace until He comes to reign. For many years in Scottish history the national watchword was, 'The Crown Rights of the Redeemer.' For this men fought and died. They went out to battle under the blue banner upon which were inscribed the words, 'For Christ's Crown and Covenant.' It was their aim to exalt Christ as King over Scotland, and to order all the affairs of the realm in accordance with His will. No doubt they did not always interpret His will aright, but sought to promote His Kingdom in ways that were neither wise nor Christian. Still their aim was right, and the enthusiasm with which they pursued it in blood and sweat and tears is an inspiration and a rebuke to us all.

Our task to-day is essentially the same, only, as we live in a far bigger world, the field of our operations is proportionately enlarged. Our task is to make Jesus King, not in our own land only, but through all the wide world. Long ago the promise was given that He should have the nations for His heritage and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession, and the world grows weary waiting for the fulfilment of the promise. This touches the very root of the vast world troubles of our time. Christ is not enthroned, His will is not obeyed, His spirit does not prevail in the councils of the nations and in the hearts of men. And He alone can establish truth and right over all the earth and bring peace to all people.

There is, indeed, much talk among us of the Kingdom of God, and a vast amount of varied activity in promoting it. The idea of the Kingdom has gripped the Christian mind of our age more powerfully, perhaps, than ever before. It is held to embrace all social, industrial and political reform. It is seen to have a direct bearing on international problems. In short, it is conceived as a great world-order bringing justice and peace to all mankind. It is much to be thankful for that this inspiring concept should occupy so large a place in the mind of our time, and that the vision should call forth so much earnest and unselfish effort.

But it may be questioned whether the current conception of the Kingdom is spiritual enough, Christlike enough. One fears that the King is too often lost sight of. But, after all, the King is more than the Kingdom, and the character of the King determines the quality of the Kingdom. Many are actively engaged in promoting, as they believe, the Kingdom of God who have never seriously faced the question of what the Kingdom really is. Many seem never to have pondered our Lord's great word, 'My Kingdom is not of this world,' or to have listened to the

apostle's interpretation that 'the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.' And so we find, under the name of the Kingdom of God, a miscellaneous assortment of ends and aims, not all of which Christ would own. His spirit is often ignored, His saving purpose obscured and His cause injured by those who are endeavouring to advance His Kingdom.

The remedy for all this is a renewed Vision of the King. We must again and again turn our eyes to the thorn-crowned Jesus for guidance and inspiration in all our work for His Kingdom. We must keep saying to ourselves and to all the world, 'Behold your King!' See how holy and true He was, never deviating a hair's breadth from the path appointed Him, never seeking to gain heavenly ends by worldly means, refusing to buy all the kingdoms of the world at the devil's price of a single act of disloyalty to God! See how long and patiently He endured, and how at last He won by no other power but the power of unconquerable love! 'Behold your King,' and learn that 'He suffered, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps.' Yet again, behold Him, and learn the lesson which His whole Church and all we His servants need so sorely to learn, that the Kingdom can come only in the King's own way.

J. H. Morrison.

'Jesus in the Midst'

John xix. 18.—'Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.'

Methinks I hear of murdered men the voice
Mixed with the murderers' confused noise,
Sound from the top of Calvary;
My greedy eyes fly up the hill, and see
Who 'tis hangs there, the midmost of the three;
O! how unlike the others he;
Look! how he bends his gentle head with blessings from the tree,
His gracious hands, ne'er stretched but to do good,
Are nailed to the infamous wood!
And sinful man does fondly bind
The arms which he extends to embrace all human kind.[1]

[1] Abraham Cowley.

1. *Christ in the midst of Human Misery.*—This moving scene is both literal and figurative; historical and symbolical. Jesus was actually crucified between two thieves, but the fact is also a revelation and a gospel.

It was a charge brought against Jesus that He companied with publicans, that He ate and drank with sinners, and He did not deny but defended the charge. 'I came not to call the righteous but sinners.' Religious respectability moves away from the slums, and looks askance at thieves and drunkards and harlots, but Jesus is 'in the midst' of them without being contaminated by them. He is there not because He has any sympathy with their sin, but because He would save them from it. He may not entirely succeed. He did not on Calvary, for while one of the thieves repented, the other railed on Him. Yet He did not get down from the Cross as He was bidden. It would have been a sad day for the world if He had. He chose then, and chooses now, to be 'in the midst.'

Sin brings suffering, and the crosses on Calvary were the symbol of it. Yet Jesus is 'in the midst' of that also, His suffering and ours. How could the suffering and sorrow of man be endured if Christ were not there? It is difficult to understand how those who do not acknowledge Him can face the dark days which life holds for each of us; but to those who, like the penitent thief, turn to Him in the midst of their sin and suffering, He gives pardon, and courage and hope. Suffering must either soften or harden us. It had both effects on Calvary, though Christ was equally near each of the sufferers. And if the scene on Calvary tells of sin and suffering, it speaks to us also of despair. These men had outraged not only Divine but human law, and were brought to the just consequences of their guilt, but when human law closed the iron gates against them, Divine love opened a golden gate for them. There need be no final despair so long as Christ is 'in the midst.'

There is a deep and sacred gloom
Where wounded hearts may enter in;
For every sorrow 'tis a tomb,
A hiding-place for every sin.

There bitter pangs of woe and loss,
There bitter pains of shame—the chief,
Are hidden by the Saviour's Cross,
And that dark cloud that veiled His grief.

Pass in thou stricken heart, 'tis dim;
But One is there who bleeds for thee,
Thy anguish will be safe with Him,
Thy aching heart shall solaced be.[1]

2. *Christ in the midst of Heart Bewilderment.*—'And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you' (John xx. 26).

There is something singularly pathetic about this record. Imagine the high hopes which these men had entertained as they companied with Jesus for these three and a half years! And suddenly, these had all been dashed to the ground. Their Master had been crucified, and they were thrown into utter bewilderment—intellectual and spiritual. Yet they kept together, and met at an old resort—the place, no doubt, where Jesus had often met with them to share their sorrow and stay their fear. It was when they were thus gathered, on the first day of the week, that Jesus stood 'in the midst' of them and said, 'Peace be unto you.'

As it was then, it is now: He is 'in the midst' of all bewildered souls. There are those whose bewilderment is intellectual. Some friend in whom we had utter confidence has failed us. Some Christian whose praise was in all the churches has fallen deeply into sin. Some loved one who was dearer to us than life has been cut off in the prime of life. Our best endeavours and sacrificial service have been ill-requited, and have ended apparently, in failure. We are startled and shocked at the great and grave problems of life which press on all sides. Others are suffering from spiritual bewilderment: the Bible perplexes them; their own complex nature perplexes them; their chequered spiritual experience perplexes them; the wider problems of spiritual life perplex them, and there pervades their spirits a great fear. This is relieved, perhaps, in some measure, by Christian fellowship in some upper-room, yet that fellowship only reveals how widespread is the perplexity. Into the midst of all such Jesus comes with His message of peace and cheer, and He will to-day, as then, give courage and a rock-like faith to men who are in the grip of fear.

3. *Christ in the midst of Spiritual Devotion.*—'For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matt. xviii. 20).

It is not to the crowd that He here promises Himself, but to two or three. He promises to be 'in the midst' of a triangle of prayer, and is, therefore, equally near to all who thus seek His face. What store we lay by the crowd! We count success or failure by counting heads—a very unsafe way of reckoning. But Christ counts hearts, and He is present wherever He can find two whose hearts go out to Him in reverent devotion.

So is spiritual devotion encouraged in out-of-the-way places, in the weak and poor and isolated churches, as we speak of them. Little churches in the country are promised the Saviour's presence, and if He be in the midst, no Church is weak, or poor, or isolated, for that presence makes the smallest gathering strong, and rich, and integral.

¶ Renwick says that oftentimes, when he had been out among the bogs on the Scottish mountains, hunted over the mosses, with the stars of God looking down upon the little congregation, they had had more of God's fellowship than Bishops had ever had in their cathedrals, or than they themselves had ever had in their kirks, when, in brighter days, they had worshipped God in peace. The dragoons of Claverhouse were incapable of quenching the joy of the Covenanters. Their piety drew its mirth from deeper springs than kings could stop, or persecution could dry up.

But we must not fail to mark the condition of His promised presence. He does not say that where two people are, or three, or more, He will be there, but only where such are gathered 'in his name;' and that refers not to the outward mention of that Name, but to the possession of His spirit. To be gathered 'in his name' means according to His nature and for His glory; to such only is His presence vouchsafed. If He be not present there may be a crowd, but not a Church, and if He be present, there will be a Church though there be no crowd.

4. *Christ in the midst of Christian Testimony.*—'And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle' (Rev. i. 13).

In Matt. xviii. 20 we saw a few believers gathered together in the Divine Name, and Jesus

[1] J. E. A. Brown.

'in the midst.' It is a picture of the weak, the isolated, the struggling churches scattered up and down the world. But here is a very different view. There was vouchsafed to the seer of Patmos a vision of the Universal Church in her capacity of witness-bearer. This universal church is represented by the countless churches of all denominations, countries and ages—all regarded as possessing and distributing light. As in former days our Lord was in the midst of His little flock, so now also He is 'in the midst of the candlesticks,' the Master-light of all our seeing and serving.

This revelation of Christ 'in the midst' of His universal Church is most impressive, for it tells of His omnipresence and adequacy. He does not say that He is in the centre of His Church, though it is true He is central. The centre is local but the midst is pervasive; the centre is geometrical, but the midst is mystical. A lamp may be in the centre of a room, but the light is in the midst. A rose tree may be in the centre of the garden, but the fragrance is in the midst. Each of us regarded physically is local, but our influence is in the midst. And so the Christ is 'in the midst' of His true Church everywhere, all-penetrating, energising, satisfying.

He, therefore, is equally near us all. It was with this in view that He said to His disciples: 'Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away.' He ceased to be local that He might become universal. And His followers should never lose sight of their obligation and their sufficiency—their obligation to 'shine as lights in the world,' and their sufficiency in Him who is the source of all light. Christ 'in the midst' of His Church is the all-safeguarding, all-unifying, and all-satisfying Fact and Truth, and just because He is there His Church must finally triumph.

5. *Christ in the midst of Eternal Glory.*—'For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes' (Rev. vii. 17).

This is the last revelation. He whom we have seen in the midst of the sufferers, and the doubters, and the churches, and the witness-bearers, is at last seen 'in the midst' of the throne, 'a Lamb as it had been slain.' It is 'Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day and forever.'

The Head that once was crowned with thorns
Is crowned with glory now;
A royal diadem adorns
The mighty Victor's brow.

The Lamb that was led by cruel hands to the slaughter is at last seen in the midst of the throne of God, triumphant over all the forces of evil. There is none that may compare with Him. All earthly masters stand on one side, and He on the other, unique, adequate, and infinite. And this being true, He claims, and has a right to claim, His place 'in the midst' of our life. We may not offer Him a place somewhere on the circumference. If He comes at all He will be central, the characterising and determining fact of our life. He wants to take possession of our whole nature, to draw us from the external and the temporal, and by making His home in us to give us a home in the Divine and Eternal.

¶ Macaulay tells us that during the Commonwealth days Cromwell was anxious to be made king. But the aristocracy and the soldiers were opposed to his plan. 'The name of king was hateful to the soldiers. Some of them were indeed unwilling to see the administration in the hands of any single person. The great majority, however, were disposed to support their general, as elective first magistrate of a commonwealth, against all factions which might resist his authority: but they would not consent that he should assume the regal title, or that the dignity, which was the just reward of his personal merit, should be declared hereditary in his family.'[1]

The Mother of Jesus

John xix. 25.—'Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother.'

1. How reticent, how reverent is the gospel record of the Mother of Jesus! Half hidden by a veil of prayers and hymns, visions and visitations—a mere touch here and there—she is obscured from us somewhat, and we do not see her distinctly. No doubt this is why some have exalted her beyond measure, and others have neglected her without reason. When we look closely at the narrative, putting together the scattered hints and glimpses of Mary, there is

[1] *History of England.*

no figure in the company grouped about the Master more lovely, more heroic, more pathetic than His Mother. But we must not think that her life was all one clear vision that left no room for doubt, no place for struggle and misgiving. That is to rob her life of reality. The narrative as we have it was her interpretation of her experience, not a prophetic scroll laid before her as she moved through the years. She lived by faith, and that was the pathos and the glory of her life.

At first we see her as a gentle peasant girl, albeit of noble heredity, modest, sweet and pious; her mind steeped in the poetry of her people, her soul attuned to the haunting echoes of prophecy. Then we see her as the wife of a carpenter; and when her Child was born in a manger she knew that He was an answer to prayer. After the morning glow came the light of common day, and we see Mary the Mother of Jesus, and also of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon, and the sisters; a dutiful wife, a wise mother—a perplexed, sometimes doubting, but finally believing woman. Blessed among women was she, lovely when she bent over the cradle, and unutterably pathetic when she stood by the dark Cross outside the city gate.

Blest in thy lowly heart to store
  The homage paid at Bethlehem;
But far more blessed evermore
  Thus to have shared the taunts and shame—

Thus with thy pierc'd heart to have stood
  'Mid mocking crowds, and owned Him thine,
True through a world's ingratitude,
  And owned in death by lips Divine.[1]

2. There are only a few glimpses given us of the eighteen silent years of boyhood, but they are enough to show us that Jesus was a mystery to His mother, as He must be to every one else. Of course, this experience comes in some degree to all mothers, all parents. Our children are ours, and yet not ours. They are their own, and must go their own way in the world. Frequently this makes for misunderstanding, all the more so when the mystery of genius is present—as we may read in that strange, sad book entitled *Father and Son*, by Edmund Gosse. Did the mother of Shakespeare understand the wondrous boy growing up in her home? Did the mother of Dante know that she held in her arms a lonely pilgrim of eternity? How could they? From the outset, Mary knew there was something mysterious about her Son, something which made a certain distance between them—something which soon or late was sure to lead Him His own way, which might be far from her way.

¶ Sometimes, looking at our children and thinking of them, we may see that some of them, simply because they have nothing very singular about them, are almost sure to pass through life without any very violent sorrow. They will keep to even courses. They have the usual qualifications for a usual career. But there may be one of our children who, we see, is different. He may show early signs of an unusual fineness of feeling; or he may be a child of great imagination; or he may from a very early time give evidence of a sensitive moral nature, one who endures almost intolerable distress of mind when it comes home to him that he has done anything wrong. Such children there are, predestined to a certain distinction and solitude in this world, whose way through life is sure to be hard. No doubt they will have the compensations which come to every exalted nature, the heights and the depths; but they will have the sorrows, and chiefly this, that they will have something of that loneliness, that friendlessness, which, to take an instance, Shakespeare bestows upon all his *Kings*.[1]

There was always something in Jesus more than Mary could understand. He was always beyond her. How strikingly this is shown in that scene in the Temple when the lost lad—lost to His parents, but not to Himself—was found talking with the doctors of the Law. The Temple was apparently the last place they thought to look for Him, which shows how little they knew One who was born to religion as to the love of His mother. His reply to their rebuke had in it all the pathos of His life: Know ye not that I must be about My Father's business? They had misread His temper and the tendency of His nature, and there are few hardships harder than to be misunderstood by those near and dear to us. Yet the service of Mary to her Son was ineffably rich and beautiful. The tie between a mother and her eldest son is unique, doubly so if she is left a widow, as

[1] Elizabeth Rundle Charles.

[1] J. A. Hutton, '*There They Crucified Him*,' 152.

Mary seems to have been. Such a fellowship is deep and unutterable, and it leaves something fine in the soul of the son, blending the strength of man with the mercy of woman—and the two together bring us near to God.

3. No one can read the gospel story, however, without seeing that there was some estrangement between Jesus and His mother in the early part of His ministry, the nature of which it is not easy to make out. It was, perhaps, an inevitable part of the tragedy of His life. Jesus, we may be sure, was remiss in no duty to His mother, but His nature was beyond hers and His work called Him afar. If Joseph died when Jesus was a lad, the entire support of the home fell upon Him until His brothers were old enough to take His place. Perhaps for this reason, the beginning of His public ministry was delayed until He was thirty years of age. When that time came the rift was felt, and it widened afterwards. After His temptation He returned to Nazareth and was nearly mobbed by His neighbours, and never visited the village again. More than once He repeated the old proverb that 'a prophet is not without honour save in his own country,' but He went further and added, 'and among his own kin, and in his own house!' There is yet another scene more heart-breaking still—a scene too sad to have been invented, and which we might have been spared but for the veracity of the record.

There was a day, of which St Mark tells, when the multitude pressed upon Jesus to such an extent that He had not even time to eat, and His family hearing of this, went out to lay hold of Him: for they said, 'He is beside himself.' How could misunderstanding go further! Hence His words setting forth the higher fellowship: 'Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother!' Faith brings the furthest near, and lack of it leaves the nearest far off. What was passing in the soul of Mary in those days of struggle and torture no words may ever hope to tell. When the news came of sick folk healed, of the blind restored to sight, of the dead raised, she 'kept these things, pondering them in her heart.' But when rumours came of plots, derision, wine-bibbing, blasphemy, and threats of death—how hard it was to keep faith with the visions and voices of other days.

Like most women, Mary was a conformist, and the public opinion of Nazareth was dear to her heart. Why could not her Son soften His words? Why denounce the rulers of the Church? So long as His teaching was mere words, it was not so dangerous. But He insisted on acting it out, actually setting forth a faith and a way of living that upset the stability of society, treating outcasts with kindness. He was not respectable—not for a day of His life! What Woolman called 'the evil custom of the world' makes men trim the truth down to fit the lower ends of compromise and comfort. Not so Jesus. He was tempted to do so in His battle in the wilderness, but spurned all bribes of easy victory and temporary success, and became the Redeemer of humanity.

4. Mother and Son—each walked a lonely way, but their paths drew together toward the end. Then it was that the sword pierced her heart, as it had been foretold. She was in the Holy City when the shadow fell, haunting the outskirts of the angry throngs which clamoured for His life. She saw Him standing crowned with thorns, condemned. With painful steps and slow she followed Him to Calvary, groping her way in the twilight of tragedy. Of all the figures that stood at the foot of the Cross, she was the most forlorn and forsaken. For the politician the Sufferer was a dangerous agitator, for the priest a fanatic, for the disciples their beloved teacher; but for Mary—He was her Son![1]

She sees her son, her God,
Bow with a load
Of borrow'd sins; and swim
In woes that were not made for Him.
Ah, hard command
Of love! Here must she stand
Charg'd to look on, and with a steadfast eye
See her life die:
Leaving her only so much Breath
As serves to keep alive her death.[2]

The sacrifice of the Cross is the sacrifice of Jesus. But it was the sacrifice of the Father likewise 'who spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all.' And it was also the sacrifice of Mary, who stood in meek acquiescence to see her Son die. This sacrifice of Mary

[1] J. Fort Newton, *The Sword of the Spirit*, 205.
[2] Richard Crashaw.

has been finely conceived by Holman Hunt. He has drawn the carpenter's shop at Nazareth. Jesus stands at His bench with uplifted arms, as though in a moment of aspiration, and Mary stooping behind Him, sees the shadow of His arms cast on a wall before Him. To her foreboding heart, it is the shadow of a cross. It is a fine suggestion of the chilling fear which early possessed her heart, and became a heavier sorrow as He passed onward in His ministry, and now was realized in this dying hour. 'A sword shall pierce thine own heart also,' Simeon had prophesied. Now standing by the Cross she felt its sharp thrust, and she bowed her head as she made the mother's last sacrifice.

5. If the Cross was the depth of Mary's sorrow who else received the first Easter news with so wild a leap of heart? Amid rumours and reports, fleeting glimpses and whispers of His voice, what must have been the quivering eagerness of her heart! At last she understood. The early Church called her Theotokos, Mother of God, because through her a new hope and joy had come into the hard old world. But she was saved, not because she was the Mother of the Saviour, but because, like all others, she found her way at last to faith in His spirit and His truth. If any might boast after the flesh, she more! But those who enter the Kingdom are born not of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of the will of God. Mary, like others, came to victory by the faith that worketh by love, by the obedience that makes us free, and the love that lifts us into the eternal fellowship.

¶ The pierced soul is at length healed. That is the thought Titian so beautifully renders in his glorious 'Assumption of the Madonna' in the great Venetian Gallery. The framework of the picture is but legend; its truth is eternal. It depicts the soul of Mary as it passes, after life's sorrows, into the presence of God. The artist has painted her upturned face as it first catches sight of her Lord. It is a face of exquisite sweetness and beauty. And it is the face of the first Mary, the Mary of the Magnificat. Perfect faith is there, perfect joy, unsullied gladness. The piercing of the sword is now for ever past. But what most of all shines out from it is its sweet adoring love—the love no more of a mother for her child, but of a ransomed soul for its Saviour. The lips, as they open in rapture, seem to be framing the words sung long ago, but now uttered with a deeper, richer melody than was possible to her then: 'My spirit doth rejoice in God my saviour.'[1]

Christ the Son

John xix. 26, 27.—'Woman, behold thy son! . . . Behold thy mother!'

1. Suffering is proverbially selfish. It constrains all the sufferer's attention, and makes him live only in himself. We take no notice of a sharp word darted at us from the midst of an agony, for when was pain considerate? On the Cross! Watch Jesus Christ on the Cross. Watch Him after that long morning of racking agony to nerve and to spirit. Wearied, worn, exhausted, dying, He sees His mother and the disciple whom He loved. In His own bitter suffering, He sees how they are suffering; He thinks of what would be a comfort and support to them; how He shall knit together the ties of love more closely between those whom He leaves behind. 'Woman, behold thy son! . . . Behold thy mother!'

¶ Epictetus tells us that he had his wishes about death. Among them these. 'I should like best,' he said, 'that it should find me busy at something noble and beneficent and for the good of all mankind.' And did not Christ die for the world; and has He not, so dying, lifted it up bodily far nearer holiness and God? 'But, since that is but little likely to befall me,' adds the wise philosopher, 'I should choose next to go out rendering what is due to every relation in life.' And here is our amazing Master, saving a world and yet remembering the welfare of His mother, thinking out a home and future for her, after He was gone.

As a rule, it is the habit of a lifetime that flames into vividness in the hot flames of trial. So was it with our Lord. All His days He had gone about doing good, in sheer forgetfulness of self; and so, even when they had nailed down His hands and feet, so that they could do nothing more, the habit of His life still held; and His heart, left free, ran out in its accustomed way to needy, desperate, sinful folk. And we, so poor and self-centred and unlike Him, had better kneel and cry, 'Dear Lord, grant us Thy faith in God, Thy courage, something of the splendour of Thy nature, that we

[1] W. Mackintosh Mackay.

may learn to live and die like Thee.' And if we really mean it, and will take it, He will grant us even that.

2. These words speak to us of the sanctity of home and the family, of the high place which home duties have in the sight of God, of Christ. True, our Lord emphasizes that there are calls of God that must come first, that take precedence of the claims even of father and mother, even of wife and child. But, on the other hand, it looks at least as if, with His heart on fire to save a world, He delayed the opening of His mission till the family duties God had laid on Him were fully met, until some other of the brothers was ready to take up His task at home. And certainly on Calvary the claims of natural affection were conceded to the full. There were many women there; but one among them was His mother, on whose lap He had heard of God, at whose knee He had learned to pray, whose love and care had filled His childhood, and of her He thought first and specially.

¶ Humanitarians are not always quite human; martyrs are not always kind. Socrates was dying nobly for the truth, when his wife came in, held up their child before him, and burst into tears. 'Let somebody take her away,' he said, and then turned to continue calmly his discussion of the philosophy of pleasure and pain. Rousseau had much to say of the rights of man, and yet denied the plainest and most fundamental of them to his own offspring, stealing through the dark to leave his babies on the doorstep of the foundling hospital.

Far from abolishing the natural affections Christ strengthened, deepened, consecrated them, and so made them a basis upon which to stand and reach out towards something wider and more general. To Him a friend is not a mere acquaintance with whom one passes the time, but one who opens his whole mind to you, and is prepared to give his life for you. That is how we are to bear ourselves towards every one. But we learn it among our friends. We are to be real brothers to our fellows; and what that means ought to be taught us in the Christian family. With the responsibility of a whole world's salvation weighing upon His heart, our Lord put first the simple homely duties of a son; and if we are forgetting these, can we be true to Him? Yet, as a generation, are we not so doing? Now that the door out of their old cramped life stands open, it is natural for a young woman to crave an independent income and the interest down at the office, but if her invalid mother's days are long and very dull, how does Christ judge that? To vote and attend meetings and the like is for some quite exciting, but is it really patriotic to do only that, and selfishly decline to bear the burden of the next generation? The little duties are often the hardest; yet a religion that breaks down at home is a vain thing.

> The primal duties shine aloft like stars,
> The charities that soothe, and heal, and bless,
> Are scattered at the feet of man, like flowers.

And we must not forget that, if it was in the thick darkness upon Calvary that there flamed out the mighty constellations by which ever since humanity has steered, the homely virtues too flower bravely on that bleak hillside. They also are a real and an essential part of Christlikeness.

3. But there is a wider application that we may give to the text. In these days the Church is divided into two parties, with aims dissimilar, or not quite parallel. The one lays the full emphasis upon the culture of the soul, and the upbuilding of a Christian character; the other stresses the need of a social Christianity, and seeks the application of the principles of Jesus to our social order.

Long ago Philo saw these same two parties tugging against each other, as they are doing now. 'There are some,' he said, 'who have attached themselves to one of these devotions and neglected the other. For, being filled with a sense of piety, they have preferred that to all other interests, and devoted the whole of their lives to the service of God: while others have adhered simply to their connection with men in social zeal, affording all alike the use of their possessions, and also, as far as possible, alleviating their woes. The latter you might properly call philanthropic persons, the former devout. But they are only semi-good, for those alone are perfect who have a reputation in both departments.' But when men argue that material welfare and material rights lie outside of the province of a society which exists to bring spiritual things to men's forgetful minds, and to induce them to give life to gaining these, here in this passage is proof, is it not, that at the

most awful moment of the Master's life, or indeed in the whole range of human history, with God and the devil fairly at grips in the decisive conflict, even then our Lord thought of His mother's comfort, and planned a home for her; and if we haughtily pass by upon the other side, accounting social wrongs too trivial for our spiritual eyes to notice, may not the Christ who has told us that His followers are as dear to Him as mother or sister or brother, look at us sternly at the last, and say, 'It was Mine, yes, it was I Myself, that you passed by and left to manage as best I could alone. My brothers and my sisters, yes, Myself, you failed to help; I whom you pinned down to struggle in the mean streets, while you were praying to Me in your splendid churches; depart from Me, you who have shown you are no friends of Mine.'

Christ the Human Sufferer

John xix. 28.—'I thirst.'

The last struggle with evil is over and the Sufferer's bodily anguish must find expression. The needs of the body, which may be forgotten or set aside in a crisis of spiritual conflict, always assert themselves with greater insistence at its close. After the forty days' trial in the wilderness was over Jesus suffered hunger. And now, after this more awful struggle with evil—with sin and with death, which is the consequence and the symbol of sin—the thirst which parched His fevered frame made itself felt. The Passion had been endured through all its stages; 'all things were now accomplished'; and so He need no longer keep back the cry of His body for the relief of His burning thirst before He passes away.

At the beginning of the Crucifixion they had offered Him a soothing draught, as the custom was, but He had refused it. He would not meet the Last Enemy of man with senses stupefied.

Thou wilt feel all, that Thou may'st pity all;
And rather would'st Thou wrestle with strong pain,
Than overcloud Thy soul,
So clear in agony.

It was to this high resolve to keep His senses unclouded that we owe the Seven Last Words. His true disciple was the Gifford lecturer who refused to allow his physical sufferings to be relieved with morphia, in order that with undulled senses he might finish the proclaiming of the creed that had become his by right of conquest, whose last words were an ascription of praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God.

But the draught which they now offered to the Sufferer on the Cross was undrugged wine, the sour beverage which soldiers drank. This He accepted, as ever holding the mean between indulgence of the body and fanatical refusal. And, by His acceptance of the offering of the nameless soldier who ran to His aid, our Lord has blessed all who have brought succour and relief to the wounded and stricken.

All fiery pangs on battlefields,
On fever beds where sick men toss,
Are in that human cry He yields
To anguish on the Cross.

1. There is something tremendously impressive about the simplicity, the anguish, the pathos of those words of helpless dependence, 'I thirst.' Jesus uttered only one cry of physical weakness: but He did utter one. There is something not only utterly sincere and attractive about One who is not ashamed to voice His weakness and His pain, but it also gives us the key to His Saviourhood. 'In all their afflictions He was afflicted—*so* He was their Saviour.' The Cross is an ugly and painful fact, and men would gladly banish it if they could. There are many who say, 'Let us now go even unto Bethlehem.' They are enchanted with a religion which they can take up in their arms and patronise. But what do we read about them at Calvary? 'They stood afar off, beholding that sight.' It has been characteristic of the natural attitude of man all through the ages. The cross of pain and suffering, of loss and sorrow and death, is eternally in our midst. There will always be the need for the sympathetic souls who are ready to run with the sponge rather than to let their hands hang down in useless, hopeless despair or unconcern, saying, 'Let be; let us see whether any supernatural agent will help the sufferer in his hour of need.' The Saviour is the One who can use the great, simple, frank speech of humanity, 'I thirst.'

Our Lord was surrounded by those who had wronged Him, and mocked at His sufferings. He might well have resolved not to let a groan escape His lips, not on any account to show His

feelings and let His enemies know how they had succeeded in hurting Him, much less to ask any act of kindness from them. It is sometimes more difficult to ask a favour than to grant one; it requires more of the spirit of forgiveness. But not only did our Lord ask a favour: He expected to receive it. We often do more through our weakness than we could ever do with our strength. Fancy a rough Roman soldier *running* to succour a helpless victim! This was victory indeed.

¶ Always suspect that as the meanest prompting of your heart which comes to your lips in the words, 'Oh! I wouldn't owe anything to him.' The great natures glory in owing anything to anybody, and most of all in owing it to an enemy. For there is nothing which binds a man to your heart like that silent and grateful forgiveness. Let the man who has wronged you feel that you are generous enough to be his debtor, and you have disarmed him of the last weapon of his hostile armoury. More than that, you have made him a humbled and grateful friend. And so it was that our Lord drew men to Him even upon the Cross, grappled to His heart the very men whose thoughtless cruelty had chosen Barabbas in His stead and delivered Him to be crucified. The natural cry of physical pain and physical need called out in those rough natures a sympathy that His great spiritual agony could never have evoked.[1]

It is never to those who are hard, or self-satisfied, or who have a comfortable and easy-going philosophy of life, or who think that there is nothing in human experience that needs explanation, that we instinctively turn in a time of need. 'Hath He marks to lead me to Him?' is the question which suffering humanity will instinctively ask when darkness falls. We may not be able to see His face in the dark, but we can always feel His side. And when the world is tired of pretending that it has abolished pain and transcended weakness, and generally risen superior to circumstances, it will find its way back to where it can hear that honest, helpful confession, 'I thirst.' It will recognize the Saviour by that one cry.

¶ In his *Recollections* a well-known man-of-letters and statesman, who was also an avowed agnostic, writes of one political crisis: 'Glad to find that I keep my head cooler than most.' The contrast between the merely superior man and the sublime man is brought out clearly in the picture which he gives of his political chief's conduct during another crisis. 'It was a Sunday afternoon. There the old fellow was, doing what old fellows have done for long ages on a Sunday afternoon, reading a big Bible.' Is there a touch of patronage, even of scorn here? The writer had the profoundest respect for his great leader. But he had yet to learn that it is to the old fellow reading the big Bible that hearts will turn, to the man who is great enough to know his weakness and the source of support, rather than to the other who complacently congratulates himself that he can keep his head cooler than most.

2. We are told that at the beginning of our Lord's public ministry He hungered, and that at the close He was athirst. That hunger and that thirst are His eternally until He shall have seen of the travail of His soul in a redeemed humanity. 'For what dost Thou thirst?' cries St Bernard; 'surely for the redemption of mankind and the joy of man's salvation.' 'For what dost Thou thirst, Lord Jesus?' asks St Augustine; 'for wine from the vine or water from the river? Thy thirst was my salvation, Thy food my redemption.'

> I lift mine eyes, and see
> Thee, tender Lord, in pain upon the tree,
> Athirst for my sake and athirst for me.[1]

He thirsts, who came that we might never thirst. He will satisfy us utterly; but He Himself will not be satisfied until we give Him our allegiance, our faith, our love, our selves.

And is not this the motive of all our service, that we should have the privilege of holding the sponge to His lips; that, running, we may do somewhat to slake that great thirst for the souls of men?

> Thou sayest this sad day 'I thirst' again,
> And I, remembering how, to ease Thy pain,
> Some harsh-faced Roman, stained and seared
> with war,
> Gave Thee his vinegar
> (And earned a fuller comfort than he gave),
> Go forth to seek for Thee at Thy behest
> Not only such suave souls as please me best,
> But rough, sour souls that Thou did'st parch
> to save!

[1] A. L. Lilley, *Nature and Supernature*, 216.

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

Christ's Perfect Work

John xix. 30.—'It is finished.'

'It is finished!'—three words in English; in the original Greek only one rather lengthy word, *tetelestai*. Perhaps it is the greatest single word which ever broke upon the ear of man. And it was probably spoken triumphantly. It is the sixth of the seven 'sayings on the Cross.' Of the fifth and seventh it is said that they were spoken 'with a loud voice.' We may think of this also as spoken with a clear, triumphant voice.

1. There is a sense in which this short saying might be the commentary on every life, for every life is closed by death, which finishes all its activities. Death is the last act. It brings release from the obligations of daily duty. And of every weary and laborious life we can imagine it being said with something of relief, 'This is the end; all is over.'

But the life of the Lord Jesus was not a common life, and the words, 'It is finished,' from His dying lips had a larger and a more glorious meaning than this. For His life was *complete*, as no other life of man has been. A short life it was—thirty years of preparation and three of ministry: that was all, yet full and perfect. It was not a complete life, indeed, in the sight of men; it seemed to be cut off just when hope was fairest and the promise of achievement in course of fruition. To those who knew Him best and loved Him and served Him most loyally His death seemed the destruction of their best hopes for the world and for themselves. Yet, in the sight of God, who sees so much further than men see, His life was complete.

¶ Completeness in life is not a thing of quantity but of quality. What seems to be a fragment may be in reality the most perfect thing on earth. You stand in some museum before a Greek statue, imperfect, mutilated, a fragment of what it was meant to be. And yet, as you look at it, you say: 'Here is perfect art. It is absolutely right; the ideal which modern art may imitate, but which it never hopes to attain.'

2. What was finished? Everything that the Father had given Him to do was finished. As we read this word our thoughts go winging back to the first recorded utterance of Jesus. He was a lad of twelve when He said, 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' Some people saunter through the world; their great ambition is an easy life. But our Lord, even in His boyhood, had an intense conviction of *vocation*. The claims of home and the appeal of motherhood were submerged in the intense conviction that He must be about His Father's business. What that conviction meant to Him in boyhood it is impossible for us to estimate. It would grow with every prayer He prayed; it would deepen as He pored over the Old Testament. But even then it mastered and controlled Him, and to the end this was His burning thought: 'I must work the works of him that sent me.' It is always a quietly glad thing to complete the task even of a day. But when the task is life-long, and has absorbed the years, far greater is the gladness of completion. That is why we never really penetrate the gladness of this cry of Jesus till we remember that His labour was His life. It was not a service of selected hours. It was a service that included everything. His sufferings and His prayers were part of it, as surely as His teaching on the hill. There was in it an obedience which was passive as well as an obedience which was active—and now that work for God and man was finished.

¶ J. M. Barrie concludes his sketch of his mother's life with these words: 'Everything I could do for her in this life I have done since I was a boy. I look back through the years and I cannot see the smallest thing left undone.' These are great words to be able to utter. And still, when we look at it, it only speaks of duty completed in one direction, and even that is qualified, 'Everything I could do I have done.' But blot out the qualification and expand the reference, and these words will stand for a description of the obedience Christ gave the Father. 'I have glorified thee on the earth,' He said on the eve of the Passion, 'having accomplished the work thou gavest me to do.'

3. All that was necessary to the accomplishment of human redemption was finished. 'He died unto sin once for all,' as St Paul says; and so obtained the victory over death once for all, and for all of us whose nature and whose sins He bore. And, ever since, the supreme act of

worship of His Church has been to plead the merits of that perfect Death. The highest hopes of our race rest on the Cross; for we know full well, from bitter experience of our own lives, that we dare not approach the holiness of God had not a perfect Atonement been made for the guilt of sin. 'It is finished' is the victorious cry of the Redeemer; and the perpetual anthem of the redeemed is this: 'Worthy art thou . . . for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.'

But this does not mean that we dare trust in spiritual indolence, that Christ will keep us from evil here and hereafter in spite of ourselves. The gospel of the Cross is no gospel to those who will not take up *their* cross. But it means that the guilt of sin from which we could never escape, here or hereafter, of ourselves, which no penitence could remove, for which no good resolutions could atone, need not be our destruction, our despair: because Christ, that strong Son of God, who for our sakes became the Son of Man, has taken it upon Himself. There is nothing to be added to that perfect Atonement for sin; it only remains that we appropriate it and make it our own, not by mere words, but by the faithful, steadfast, penitent resolve to follow Christ in life and in death, to take Him as the Master of life, to receive Him as the very source and spring of all that is best in life, as the Head of that mystical Body of which we are very members incorporate.

¶ Those of us who spend our holidays in the mountains know our indebtedness to trail-makers, who blazed paths through the forest and set up cairns on the slopes of the summits above the timber line. They have undergone for us the uncertainty and toil of discovering the route which avoids an impassable crevasse, which takes us around some subordinate peak, which carries us up a favouring ridge with fine outlook, which skirts a precipitate side and sets us on an open approach to the top. They reached the summit, and have marked for us a sure way. We profit by their finished task in the well-indicated trail. What they did, they did for many. But this does not mean that their work relieves us of effort. We must climb the path they have marked and cover every step of the distance to the peak in order to enjoy the prospect.[1]

[1] H. S. Coffin, *The Meaning of the Cross*, 123.

4. How shall we apply the thought of this fullness and finality of the life of Christ to our own lives? If we are to be like Him, our work for God must be the most absorbing interest of our life. There is a sense, of course, in which we can never say, 'It is finished,' at the last. The Apostle Paul, when in sight of martyrdom, could write, 'I have finished the course;' but he did not claim to have finished his work in the sense in which his Master had finished His. It is our high privilege to be fellow-workers with God, but we do not finish our work; we leave it only half done. It is the index and the consequence of sin that we do not accomplish all that we ought, all that we might, in our lives. And our failure is largely caused by the self-seeking and self-pleasing which mar our work at every point. If we would think more of the work to which God has called us, each one, and less of ourselves—if we would remember that God's work can be done only through that willing self-sacrifice which is the very seal of the Christian life, then indeed we would be in the way of hastening the Kingdom of God.

¶ J. H. Newman wrote: 'One alone among the sons of men has carried out a perfect work, and satisfied and exhausted the mission on which He came. One alone has with His last breath said "consummatum est." But all who set about their duties in faith and hope and love, with a resolute heart and a devoted will, are able, weak though they be, to do what, though incomplete, is imperishable.'[1]

'It is finished' marks the consummation of the work of Christ, but only the beginning of the work of His Church. That work will not be finished until the whole world has been brought to the foot of the Cross, and until all men have been made to see in the Death of Christ that which alone can give them victory over sin and death. It is in that work that we are called to be fellow-workers with God.

The Piercéd Christ

John xix. 37.—'They shall look on him whom they pierced.'

THESE words, with which the Evangelist closes his account of the Crucifixion, are a prophecy of the Book of Zechariah. Zechariah had seen his vision of a day yet to come, when the people of

[1] W. Ward, *Life of Cardinal Newman*, i. 343.

God, long outcast and alien, hardened in heart and rebellious in spirit, should return in penitential sorrow to the faith and fear and service of God. 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn.' That mourning should be as bitter as the broken-hearted sorrow a man has for his only son, or his first-born child. It shall be as widespread as was the mourning of Israel over its young hero, King Josiah, when he was fatally wounded at Megiddo. Josiah had gone forth to chivalrous battle in a cause which was not his own, and an archer's arrow had found him. As he was carried back to Jerusalem, up the valley of Hadadrimmon, men and women marked the stricken king slowly dying. And when he died Judah and Jerusalem mourned as Edinburgh mourned after Flodden, or as Paris lamented when Mirabeau was dead. And the mourning was to be not only keen and universal, but personal and individual. 'The land shall mourn, every family apart—every husband and wife apart.' That far-off vision was fulfilled, said John, recording the spear-thrust in Christ's side, when men looked on Him whom they had pierced. They shall look on Him, and they shall mourn with that poignant and widespread and individual mourning which Zechariah recalled when Jerusalem wept for its dead king.

Let us consider, then, this mourning at the sight of the piercéd Christ. Let us distinguish the different kinds of mourning.

1. *The Mourning of Sympathy.*—The Cross of Christ, in its simplest aspect, is the darkest tragedy of history. It touches every heart to sorrow. No one can read the story of Jesus, who was meek and lowly of heart, who took up little children in His arms, who touched the leper, sighed over the blind, and wept over the dead, who walked in the lovely apparel of His holiness, and see Him, even when death has done its work, mutilated by the spear-thrust, without a shadow falling on the spirit. It matters not what men are, believers or unbelievers, quickly moved to emotion or hard and stoical, this piercing seems the crowning wrong. A man has ceased to be human who is not stilled and solemnized and quickened to sympathy as he looks on the piercéd Christ.

The evidences of this sympathetic mourning over the Cross are many and clear. The Christian Church feels the call to sorrow more deeply as the centuries pass. The three hours of Christ's dying almost eclipse the joy of His victory. Still more evident is the sympathy of those who are alien to the Church of Christ. The Jew of to-day is as unrelenting in his denial of Christ's Deity, as hostile to His claims as ever he was. Christ has not the marks of his Messiah. But the story of the Cross moves him to a silent sympathy. He seldom mentions it. He feels it to be the most wilful blunder of his rulers, and the most hideous crime of his race. It is the deed which he would expunge, if he could, from the annals of his history.

This mourning of sympathy has a still more convincing proof and evidence in the universal consent of humanity. History recounts the story as the pre-eminent evil deed of all time. Literature touches the story with heavy and sombre sentences. Art invests its portrayal with all the sadness that deeply penetrating minds can feel. Music is always moved to a coronach of lamentation. They are all merely expressing with wisdom and understanding the pathos more dimly felt by careless hearts.

¶ Some years ago a company was gathered to an afternoon recital of music. The hall was crowded with youth and gaiety intent on some hours of pleasure. Towards the close of the programme a young girl sang her first song as a promising pupil. Her fresh voice and her artless grace captivated the audience. The encore was imperative. But she had not prepared herself for such a reception, and she was at a loss what to sing. In a mood of trembling courage she chose a song dear to her own heart. She sang Watts' greatest hymn, as set to Mason's fitting music,

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

She was listened to in breathless silence. A thrill of rapture passed over them all. Women who were the moment before idle in thought and flippant in speech were touched to their highest and tenderest moods. Strong men sat looking straight before them, keeping an iron grip on their emotion, lest they should be betrayed. The whole company was led back to the Cross.

2. *The Mourning of Penitence.*—There is something deeper than the mourning of sympathy; there is the mourning of penitence. There are millions who have wept over Christ's sorrow who have never been drawn to His feet. The constant danger of all sympathy is to expend itself in tender and selfish feeling and in words of picturesque solace. But there is a look at the piercéd Christ which sees more than His wounds. It sees the cause of them, the wrong of them, the guilt of them.

There are more ways of piercing Christ's heart than with a Roman spear. Do we never indulge in reckless moods? Do we never harden our hearts against poverty and wretchedness? Are we never unjust and untrue, and unkind to those who can make no defence against our words and deeds? Are we never scornful, contemptuous, and bitter-tongued to those who cannot retaliate? 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me.' There are thrusts which pierce, not that poor, dead, ruptured heart which Longinus tore, but the quick and living and loving heart of Christ.

¶ We may recall in Hawthorne's *Mosses from an Old Manse* the scene where, going through the virtuoso's collection, he nearly falls over a huge bundle, like a peddler's pack, done up in sackcloth and very securely strapped and corded. 'It is Christian's burden of sin,' said the virtuoso. 'O pray, let me see it,' cried I. 'For many a year I have longed to know its contents.' 'Look into your own conscience and memory,' replied the virtuoso. 'You will there find a list of whatever it contained.'

Thus am I come
To Him at last. The call is answered now
Which followed me so long. I look this day
On Him whom I have pierced, and mourn for
Him
With bitter mourning. Christ, my Passover,
Is sacrificed for me; my countless sins
Are heavy on His head; I mourn for Him
Whom I have pierced. Behold, He loveth me,
He gives Himself for me!

3. *The Mourning of Despair.*—'They shall look on him whom they pierced' is a prophecy daily being fulfilled, but there is one fulfilment yet to come. In Christian teaching this world is passing on to a consummation and end of all things. With that teaching the affirmations of history and the conclusions of science are in full accord. It is not only that there shall be crisis after crisis, judgment after judgment, age after age, but there shall be a consummation when all ages shall end. 'Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father.' 'When the Son of Man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations.' There is much in the record of this consummation which has been left dark. There are some things in the prophecy of the last event of which we have lost the key. There are many things which have not been revealed. But this is always clear, that, in ways the finite, human imagination cannot clearly realize, we shall see Christ, and the Christ whom we shall see shall be Him whom we have pierced.

What is the glory of the Son of Man? It is not a swift and merciless vengeance; not an implacable anger. 'We beheld his glory,' is the hymn of His disciples, 'the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' That is the glory of the Son of Man—fullness of grace and truth. Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The wrath of Christ is the wrath of the Lamb, but of the Lamb who was slain. And yet it will be a dreadful thing to look upon the Son of Man even in the fullness of His glory when we look upon Him as one whom we have pierced. There will emerge the shame, the terror, and even the penalty of that day of final consummation.

¶ Sir Edward Burne-Jones has set this truth in one of his noble conceptions. He pictures Christ coming in His glory. Angels fill the empyrean and press upon Him as they fly. A crown of simple loveliness is on His brow. A white robe symbolizes His kinghood. His face is calm and sweet and gracious. There is love-light in His eyes, and pitying patience on His lips. As He comes He draws aside His white robe and bares His side, and there is seen the wound which the soldier made. Every eye sees that piercéd side.

But there is another way of looking on Christ, which is the only way that brings peace and healing and joy. It is the look which sees not only the wound, and not only the sin which caused it, but also the love and grace which

bore it. It is not our mourning, not even the mourning of our penitence, that saves us. The look of the penitent is chastening and purifying. But he who looks only in penitence has never passed on beyond the Cross in his pilgrimage. The look that saves is the look that believes that on Him were laid the iniquities of us all. When God pours out His spirit of grace and of supplications we look in penitential mourning, but when the Spirit falls, in even larger measure, we see the piercéd Christ in that faith which finds life for a look at the crucified One.

Ah Lord, we all have pierced Thee : wilt Thou be
  Wroth with us all to slay us all ?
Nay, Lord, be this thing far from Thee and me ;
By whom should we arise, for we are small,
By whom if not by Thee ?

Lord, if of us who pierced Thee Thou spare one,
  Spare yet one more to love Thy Face,
And yet another of poor souls undone,
  Another, and another—God of grace,
Let mercy overrun.[1]

The Rising of Christ

John xx. 13.—'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.'

In this most beautiful and moving story of the first Easter morning there is nothing that touches so deep a pathos, or sends on so typical an experience to the future as Mary's despairing cry. 'They'—and in the very vagueness there is a bitter sound, as if she were feeling men and things in general arrayed against her—'they have taken away my Lord!' And all the time He was risen, and waiting to show Himself to her. Only, when He did show Himself, it was not as she had thought to see Him. She was expecting a dead body wrapped, with sweet spices, in fine linen. She found a living friend, who called her by her name.

Why for thy Lord dost thou weep and mourn
Like one half broken-hearted and forlorn ?
No need for Him that thou shouldst mourn and
  weep,
No need with tears an empty shroud to steep.

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

He Whom thou seekest in the murky tomb
Hath sprung bright and victorious from the
  gloom ;
He lives, He greatly lives for evermore ;
See open wide the rock's sepulchral door !

Why bring'st thou myrrh and spices, offerings
  meet
For pallid corpses in their winding sheet ?
His Body blooms with immortality,
Meet to return to His paternal sky.

Thy tears proclaim the greatness of thy love,
Nor doth thy Lord thy streaming tears reprove ;
Hear'st thou ? and know'st thou not that voice
  adored ?
'Tis thine own name ! He speaks—thy God and
  Lord.[1]

Resurrection is the method of the Kingdom of God. Not by steady and unbroken progress does it advance, but by death and rising again in new form from the dead. So it has been in the history of the Church. Again and again the familiar forms in which faith had apprehended Him die and are lost to sight, only to be superseded by some new aspect of Him, at first unfamiliar and distrusted, at last recognized as Christ risen again. So it has been also in the faith of individuals.

1. *In History.*—The Church began in a primitive simplicity which was content to tell the story of the Gospels. And, told by hearts hot with love to Jesus, that story conquered the world. But as the faith spread through the Roman Empire, and came in contact with the Greek thought of the day, lawless thinking and loose organization demanded new forms both of creed and of ecclesiasticism, and the ancient Catholic Church arose. Doubtless there were many simple souls who felt themselves lost and bewildered among all those new institutions, and whose cry was : 'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.' Yet He was not taken away, but risen, in a new form suited to the new situation.

But that form, too, became obsolete. The ritual, like burial spices, seemed to hide Him in its formalities of worship, and love died away. Then came the Reformation, sweeping away much of what had once revealed the Lord to the world, and substituting great intelligible

[1] Isaac Williams.

truths which woke the intellect as well as the devotion of the world. But there were tender and reverent spirits to whom the old way had meant much, and who, like Luther's wife, felt the chill of the new, and the old cry was heard again. But Christ was risen, a great Sun of Righteousness that gladdened all the Western lands and brought healing in His wings.

Yet again that living truth hardened into dead dogma. So there arose, first the successive evangelistic revivals, and then the broader and more human presentation which has taken for its central thought the Fatherly rather than the Judicial aspect of God. Again there were grave and loyal spirits who felt the new developments dangerous, and who had to learn that Christ was not taken away by the changes they had witnessed, but only risen once more, to live and speak in new times.

All these illustrate the same truth of the method of resurrection. Phase after phase of Christian faith rises, lives, and grows obsolete: and always there are some who cry that the Christ of the fathers has been taken away. But really it is only a phase that has been taken. That phase is dead. It has served its time, and has now become ineffective, no longer influencing conduct, stirring the heart, or convincing the intellect. Those historic disappearances of Christ warn us against the attempt to go back and find Him in any more primitive form of faith. They teach us to treat forms of faith new to us respectfully, as if in them indeed we may find the risen body of the Lord. Love at the first found this truth, and so discovered the risen One; and in times of doubt and change love must rediscover Christ.

¶ A faith which does not grow every instant into something new that swallows up and includes the faith of the moment before, is dead in formalism and unreality; for life is movement before everything. Hence while living faith clings with unshaken confidence to the Divine Word, it is wholly detached from its own inadequate apprehension of that word; ever ready to receive continual correction and adjustment; never surprised at any new face the familiar but many-sided Truth may present. It will never be so obstinately set upon looking for the Truth in one direction only, according to some ungrounded prepossession, as not to be ready at a word to turn right round and find Jesus standing in the light of the Sun, not lying in the darkness of the tomb; living among the living, not dead among the dead—nearest where He seemed farthest away.[1]

2. *In Individual Experience.*—Here, too, Christ often disappears, and those who have lost Him come to old means of grace—doctrines, sacraments, devotions—and find them but cold and empty cerements. Doctrinal causes may explain the change. From some, creeds have taken away their Lord, and from others the passing of creeds has done this.

There are those who feel that the hard experiences of life have robbed them of the Christ of grace and love. Disappointment, disaster, and discouragement all seem to create for them an empty tomb. They have known Christ in His early gifts of peace and pardon, have sat at His feet to learn the elementary lessons of His Kingdom, have followed Him in the pathways of service, and have experienced something of His power both within and through them. But now all is changed. Unexpected experiences have overtaken them; and the Christ whose love served them well in other days seems to be no longer available—at any rate effectively. Now, as a matter of fact, such ones, like Mary Magdalene, are in the presence of a miracle, and do not know it! For the risen Lord, who long ago began the work of transformation in them, is really working by means of these very experiences to bring them into fuller and more intimate knowledge of Himself. They are missing Him by misinterpreting His ways.

¶ George Macdonald puts into the mouth of one of his characters who is suffering the smart of sorrow and the discipline of suffering the petulant cry:

'I wish I'd never been made!'

To which her friend replies: 'My dear, you're not made yet. You're only being made, and are finding fault with the Maker's process!'

Others have lost Him through ease and luxury, and self-indulgence. They used to be poorer, and Christ was more to them then. But those worldly advantages which they strove so hard to gain have ill repaid them. They have taken away their Lord, and with Him have gone peace, and the vitality and freedom and

[1] Father Tyrrell.

gladness which once they knew. In such cases it is not really Christ who has been taken away. It is the world that has taken away their hearts from Him.

¶ Near the end of his life Pierre Loti wrote one of his most charming books about his visit to Jerusalem; and it is one melodious wail over the departed glories of the ancient city of peace, beautiful for situation on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. 'They have taken away the Lord,' is the burden of this modern book of lamentations. The style, as in all Loti's writings, is exquisite; but his cavalier sighs over the sacred sites seem all too *dilettante*, and almost repel. It is like a brilliant butterfly flitting about majestic ruins. But there is one passage where you suddenly surprise him, as it were, upon his knees. The truth comes out that he who had given up the deepest things in life, intent only upon his devotion to his mistress Art, had taken the journey to the Holy Land to recover, if it might be, ere yet it was too late, the lost faith of youth. And it is the naked soul of the man that cries aloud in these words: 'Oh! who shall sound the depths of my infinite anguish in those hours of quiet recollection of an evening, or in the too clear brightness of the morning! . . . And nothing in the world can take His place, the Christ, when once a man has lived in Him.'[1]

In one way or another, the world has often been too much for us. Yet none of all these things has taken away our Lord. He is risen, and He waits to meet us, when we wander bewildered, disheartened, or ashamed. His appearance will not indeed be exactly what it was before. The search for truth, the discipline of suffering, and the shame of apostasy—each works in the soul changes which require some new aspect of the Christ. But the wonderful thing about Christ is that He is sufficient for life in all its aspects; and that, whatever be our experience, and however impossible it be now to regain the exact aspect of faith which once was ours, there is in Him all that man can ever need. He stands not where we were but beside us where we are, and if we will but turn and look we shall find that He is risen and not taken away.

[1] Hubert L. Simpson, *The Nameless Longing*, 136.

The Unrecognised Christ

John xx. 15.—'Supposing him to be the gardener.'

1. One of the most striking features in the gospel narratives of the Resurrection is the reference that is repeatedly made to the fact that those to whom our Lord appeared failed at first to recognize Him.

For example, in the exquisitely told story of the 'Walk to Emmaus,' we read that 'it came to pass, while Cleopas and his companion communed and questioned together on the road, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But,' continued the Evangelist, 'their eyes were holden that they should not know him.'

Again, there is an incident of a similar kind recorded in the last chapter of St John's Gospel. The scene is laid in Galilee this time. At the suggestion of Simon Peter, a number of the disciples had gone a-fishing. Trained though some of them, at least, were to the business, and familiar from boyhood with the most productive areas of the lake, they had worked their nets hard all night, and had nothing but seaweed to show for their labour. Not a single fish flapped in the bottom of the boat. Day was now breaking, and with the rising of the sun the last chance of a catch was gone. It was time for the unsuccessful toilers to be thinking of turning towards the land. So, with their nets stowed on board, they searched through the gray morning light for a point on the shore which they might make for, and where they could beach their boat. And as they did so, what was their surprise to see a solitary figure standing near the water's edge. It was Jesus who stood there. 'Howbeit,' as the Evangelist says, 'the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.'

Both of those stories are singularly beautiful, but the one from which the text is taken is more touching than either of them. Mary Magdalene, like Cleopas and his friend, like Simon Peter and his unsuccessful colleagues in that memorable fishing expedition, also failed to recognize Jesus. She merely thought she was talking to the gardener when she was actually in fellowship with her Lord. The moment of recognition came in a very wonderful, though in a very human, way. The light shone for Mary when He whom she had thought to be a gardener called her by name, and just in the tone of the

voice, in the way of speaking her name, she knew it was Jesus to whom she was talking.

2. Now, it is impossible that any of us should repeat Mary's mistake to-day. We have no occasion or opportunity to do so. Jesus Christ is no longer visible to men's bodily eyes. He has withdrawn Himself from that condition of existence in which His presence can be recognized by sense-perception. We are not liable to meet Him walking in some graveyard, on the road, or by the seashore. There is no possibility of our ever having to own that we confused His gracious appearance with that of some one else. But in another sphere, the sphere of our inner experience, it is far from unlikely that some of us may for long have been unaware, that He, and none other, had drawn near to us, and was speaking to us.

Communion between Christ and the believer is one of the great truths of our faith. It is rightly regarded by all of us as essential to real Christianity. We should be in a poor state indeed if all we had for guidance and help was a teacher, even though he were a Divine teacher, who spoke centuries ago. Our need is present —present light, present help, present strength. And no message could be a gospel which had not the authority to tell of a present Lord who abides with His people. That gospel we possess and we rejoice in it. The living touch of the Christ upon every heart which gives itself to Him in trust is one of those truths which we count most precious. The great sacrament of our faith symbolizes it for us—the spread table, the waiting fellowship, and the unseen Master who comes to complete and crown the feast. But is it not the experience of many of us that we never face that truth without some inward shrinkings and doubts? How little we know directly of the presence of Christ! We feel it as we hear men speak about this truth, and we wonder why it is. Many of us feel that there must be some great lack in our religious experience, that we have not attained to the heart and soul of Christianity.

¶ In connection with a certain experience, John Bunyan makes Hopeful say to Christian in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, 'I was ignorant that this was the work of God in me.' And a similar ignorance characterizes the minds of many young men and women with regard to what goes on in their inner life. They hear others using time-honoured expressions descriptive of religious experiences, and they are at a loss to know what they mean. They conclude that there is something mysterious and supernatural about the feelings and convictions referred to, and they are unable to detect any corresponding phenomena in themselves.

3. What encouragement can we bring out of this old record to cheer and lift up? Why surely this, that even in the springtime of the faith and with those who knew the Master best, His spiritual presence was not recognized, that, in a word, He was there when He was not known to be there. Mary supposed she was talking to a gardener. Yet all the time she was talking to her Lord. Is that so far away from our lives? Is it not possible that we have been supposing also, and supposing that Christ was far when in reality He was near. The man of business, for example, the practical man immersed in affairs, and with little aptitude for the mystical, thinks he has no direct experience of communion with Christ. Yet he has been trying to make and keep his business clean, to govern it by the highest principles he knows. Where does that desire come from? It comes from the Christ who abides within the hearts of those who love Him.

And the young man or woman who is seeking a real religious experience, who is dissatisfied, and eager for deeper discoveries, who but the Master of men is the source of that desire? Let us never imagine for a moment that our feeble discernments are the measure of Christ's nearness. He is with us when we do not know. The greatest mistake in religious thinking is to imagine that these great spiritual privileges are given only to those of a certain kind of temperament, who have much opportunity for solitude and meditation. The presence of Christ blesses every worker for the world's good. He is near to those who toil in any way for the vision of that Kingdom which He lived and died to establish. They may not know it; immersed in life's manifold activities they may seem to themselves to be out of touch with the heights of mystical truth. That is the folly and the blindness of our supposings.

Christ is with us, near, not far; no distant teacher but the very heart of our life. Let us get behind that veil of supposing and live in the full realization of the truth of the Gospel.

Elusive to our apprehension Christ's communion may be, coming and going with changing mood, moving with the great tide of feeling which ebbs and flows, but that is not the truth of things. When Christ comes He comes to stay. His word is, 'Abide in me and I will abide in you.' If we can exchange our foolish supposings for a trust in His promises, life will change for us. It will not always be raised to the pitch of intense feeling, vision will not always cheer the eyes, but the heart will possess that strong and quiet assurance which is the deepest secret of the highest life.

The Resurrection of Faith

John xx. 16.—'Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.'

This is the story of a discovery that has meant more to the world than any other event in its history—the discovery that Jesus lives. The discovery was made by a woman whose wounded mind Christ had healed and brought to peace. We owe all honour to her for this discovery: for she made it by a venture in faith and love—by following the heart, the intuitions, rather than the reason; and, like many other pioneers, she found far more than she dreamed when she went out to seek.

1. Let us think of how she made the discovery. She had gone to the grave that morning with her young faith in ruins. Whatever ideas had begun to cluster around the person of Jesus for her and for the disciples, ideas of His Lordship and His kinship to God, Calvary had laid them in the dust. She just did not know what to think about Him now. With His death life had lost its spring, its inspiration, its motive for going on. She had lost her best friend. And all the hopes which He had quickened in her soul had faded like 'the insubstantial pageant' of a dream. It was what we would call the loss of faith.

The same kind of thing happens among ourselves. Sometimes it happens through a great sorrow. Someone is taken who was the centre of the joy and happiness of life, and the face of God seems hidden. There is nothing left to cling to. Sometimes it happens after a period of intellectual unsettlement. Sometimes it comes through a bitter experience—the betrayal by a friend, it may be; or a shock which destroys our confidence in life. In all these cases, of course, it may be said that the faith that could thus be shattered was not very deep or very securely founded. The event that seems to have destroyed faith we can be sure has not really done so; rather is it merely the storm which has revealed the sandy foundation. To the man who has seen Jesus, and known Him for what He is, there is nothing that can shift his anchorage. That is just the point here: Mary had not seen Jesus for what He really is. The real meaning and value of that Divine personality had not yet dawned upon her sight. For her, at this moment, He was the dearest friend she had ever known or could know—One who had saved her very soul. But Calvary had destroyed Him. He was at the mercy of death. He was among the mortals. She had not realized His infinite value, His indestructible love and friendship. And all she could utter was this moaning cry, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.'

But here is a thing to be noted. Mary did not yield to her despair. Nothing that had happened could stem her love or her gratitude. She was bound to Him by a bond of memory that death could not sever. She could not go back, as some have done, to plunge into the world again, and forget. Jesus had awakened in her the need for a fellowship which none but He could supply, and for which nothing that life might give could ever make up. That is always what happens when once we have met with Christ. Nothing can ever take His place again. If He has come to us, and then, again, we have lost the sense of His influence, there is always a sense of emptiness: there has passed away a glory from the earth.

There is something in the soul of the world which He has put there by coming into it that will always respond to Christ. There are needs that life creates which He alone can meet, wounds which He alone can heal. The further we go with Him the more we find He leads us into a world in which we cannot live without Him—a fact which is part of the problem of civilization to-day. We have gone so far in submitting to His Spirit that we must either go further or find it impossible to carry on at all.

For oh! the Master is so fair,
His smile so sweet to banished men,
That they who meet Him unaware
Can never turn to earth again.

But Mary did not give up seeking. Though it was only a grave, as she imagined, that held Him now, she sought the grave. Though her love and loyalty could find no other expression than to anoint His body, weep beside His tomb, and nurse His memory—that she could do. And she had her reward—as love and loyalty always have. For she heard at length a voice that said to her, 'Mary.' And, knowing in a flash that it was He, there quickly came the response, 'Master.'

At dusk of dawn the fragrant garden slept
Full of a mystery the night had known,
When Mary entered, trembling and alone,
And as she trod the grassy way she wept;
But from the place of deepest shadow crept
A light most radiant—there was no stone!
And the cold rock in which He rested shone
Where two archangels holy vigil kept.
Wondering she saw the flame-white seraphim
At the dark entrance bidding her rejoice,
Yet on the flowers her tears fell one by one;
Then turning comfortless in search of Him
She heard the quiet music of a Voice,
And Christ stood there against the rising sun.[1]

There are those who tell us that the yearnings and cravings that set us seeking for a personal fellowship with God are all illusion; that they come from ourselves; and that all prayer feeds on is our own emotions. In the south of France, at Avignon, there is an old bridge which ends in midstream. You pass over what remains, a firm good road, with promise of reaching the other side, and then you come to a chapel, and that is all. That is how some people think of religion; a road that leads to the unseen, along which we travel, and then come to a place where we are left with our unanswered prayers and our unsatisfied longings spending themselves upon a void.

In a story of Mr H. G. Wells a distraught man who has found no real satisfaction in life goes to a doctor. The doctor tries various keys to his problem, makes various suggestions. 'You have never,' he asks, 'turned to the idea of God?' There is a pause. 'I can't believe in a God.' 'But this loneliness, this craving for companionship?'—'We have all been through that,' says the other; 'we have all in our time lain very still in the darkness with our souls crying out for the fellowship with God, demanding some sign, some personal response. The faintest feeling of assurance would have satisfied us.'—'And you have never had any response?'—'It faded: it always does.'—'I wonder,' Wells goes on, 'how many people there are nowadays who have passed through this experience of ineffectual invocation, this appeal to the fading shadow of the vanished God. I can believe that over all things there is righteousness, but righteousness is not mercy, nor comfort nor friendliness, nor any of such dear and intimate things.'

But are we looking for some kind of emotion? Or are we looking, as we ought to look, for some clear word of duty? for some constraint of conscience? for some light upon the way of life? for some sense of the glory of Jesus to touch our souls? The experience of Mary is the experience of thousands. It is the sense of having in Christ a personal friend—the assurance in Him of a love that cares and understands—the conviction, which deepens with every fresh response of faith and duty, that God has to do with us, and that we have to do with Him, and that somehow His hand is on the tiller of our life. Mary found Jesus the personal Saviour, living, radiant, abiding for ever. And why? *Because He was seeking her.* That is the real explanation of our longings. These prayers are all of His inspiration. These aspirations are all of His kindling. Perhaps we seek too anxiously. We do not wait enough. For God oftenest finds us when we are quiet enough to be found, when we are still enough and open enough to hear His voice. Salvation is of Him, not of us; it is of His grace, not of our deserving; it is of His gift, not of our achieving. We can be sure He is seeking us more than we are seeking Him.

¶ In the Memoir of Dr Estlin Carpenter, the well-known Unitarian leader and scholar, there is a precious scrap of autobiography in which Carpenter tells us that during his college days, when he had no sense of personal relationship with God, there came to him a vivid personal experience which made all life a new thing to

[1] T. S. Jones.

him from that time :—'I went out one afternoon for a walk alone. Suddenly I became conscious of the presence of someone else. I cannot describe it, but I felt I had as direct a perception of the being of God all round me as I have of you [he was writing to a friend] when we are together. It was no longer a matter of inference, it was an immediate act of spiritual (or whatever adjective you like to employ) apprehension. It came unsought, absolutely unexpectedly. I remember the wonderful transfiguration of the far-off woods and hills as they seemed to blend in the infinite being with which I was thus brought into relation. This experience did not last long. But it sufficed to change all my feeling. I had not found God because I had never looked for Him. But He had found me ; He had, I could not but believe, made Himself personally known to me. I felt that God had come to me, I could now not only believe in Him with my mind, but love Him with my heart.'

Thou seekest us, in love and truth,
More than our minds seek Thee ;
Through open gates, Thy power flows in
Like flood-tides from the sea.

2. Let us ask what this discovery means in the region of personal religion. It meant two things to Mary.

(1) It meant that death made no difference to her intimate friendship with Jesus. The gulf was bridged. His spirit had the power of immediate contact with hers. *Jesus lives.* Time and space, which limit our intercourse with one another, have no power to limit our vital contact with Christ. That is the simplest way to put it. No one in his sane senses would ever take up the position that in the case of our friends death makes no difference. It makes an appalling difference to our human friendships. But the claim of the New Testament, and the message of the Resurrection, is that it is otherwise with Jesus. He lives, and in His living personality He has access to our souls. Space and time and circumstances cannot limit His presence.

Thomas Hardy did not believe in this kind of immortality for anyone. For him, the only immortality was that by which people live in the memories and in the love of those they leave behind. He has two pathetic poems on the subject. In one he describes the appeal which a woman who is dead makes to one she loves. Her Shade, whatever that may be, calls to him.

In you resides my single power
Of sweet continuance here.
On your fidelity I count
Through many a coming year.

He makes answer that he will live for her sake. And then the poem ends on this note of grief and hopelessness—

But : grows my grief. When I surcease,
Through whom alone lives she,
Her spirit ends its living lease,
Never again to be.

That was his conception of a future life. We live a shadowy existence so long as people remember us and keep in their hearts some love for us like the afterglow of the setting sun ; and then we die, because we are really dead already ! But does any such conception as that explain the power of Jesus ? Does memory alone explain His influence on men and women, generation after generation ? Does memory explain the thousands upon thousands who claim that in their hearts, in some language that was clearer than speech, they have heard Him call them by name, and have been compelled to turn round about from some way of sin or despair or doubt, and acknowledge Him 'Master' ? The fact is, that in His case death has made no difference to His intimate power with men, to the reality of His friendship. We feel that it makes no difference to His power to judge us. That Man on the Cross throws a very startling light into our souls—a light so real that there are people who dare not think about Him at all. And He challenges us ; He is challenging us in this generation. His message is valid for to-day. One by one, His startling ideas as to the way in which nations ought to live and men ought to treat their fellows are finding their way into our legislation, our industrial management, our international settlements. There is a curious immediacy about the words of Jesus, as if they were spoken straight into our hearts. We find ourselves taken into a world where He stands beside us and says to us, 'Mary' or 'Thomas,' or 'John' or 'David.'

¶ In his novel, *Rough Justice*, C. E. Montague represents an English schoolboy as saying to

his father in a moment of confidence: 'I do believe, sir, I've loved Him. Of course it's a big word to use, but . . . whatever He said seems to grow into being a bit of yourself till you can't make up your mind what to do, in anything big, without thinking, first, "If I should do this, would Christ bar me?"'

(2) The other thing that leaps out of this story is that *He has to do with us each one individually*. When He came down the Jericho road that day He made Zaccheus feel that his home was the goal of His journey. When He met for the first time a woman who had fallen, a man who had sinned, one look from His eyes was enough to make them feel that it was for them He had come that way. There is a line in the *Dies Irae* that always brought tears to the eyes of Samuel Johnson as it called up the picture of Christ by the well-side:

Seeking me, Thou sat'st there weary.

It is the same to-day. The centuries vanish in mist when we stand before the gaze of these penetrating eyes. It is the power of love, which is always personal. He knows us each one, and makes us feel that He knows us. He calls us by name, and His message is that we are infinitely worth while to Him—that our loss is His loss, and that our love is part of His heaven. He calls each one of us into His world—that higher world in which He lives victoriously; from which sin and death could not shut Him out; that world in which love is the law of life, and service is the key to happiness; where to do the right, seek the truth, and think for others as for ourselves is the hallmark of the citizen; that world which is both here and yonder, and is the Father's house. His friendship is the door into that higher world for which God made us. And if we feel afraid of the difficulty or the cost or the weakness of our will, listen to His words: 'All power is given unto me in heaven, and in earth, and *I am with you alway*.'

Touch Me Not

John xx. 17.—'Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.'

It is the morning of the Resurrection. It is the first meeting of the risen Christ and Mary Magdalene. Jesus speaks to her, but only when He speaks a second time, calling her by name, does she see who it is. And then, with a certainty that never thereafter wavered or admitted of a moment's doubt, and that she lived on and died by, happy all her days—she *knew*. In the sudden revulsion of her feeling and the first thrilling leap of joy, she casts herself at His feet. 'Touch me not.' We are chilled by what sounds like an undeserved rebuff, but Mary understood.

1. 'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father.' What is the meaning of the prohibition? Many writers in dealing with these words have assumed that our Lord forbade Mary Magdalene to touch Him at all because He was not yet ascended to the Father. They then go on to infer that our Lord meant that the time for physical touch had gone, and that after He had ascended there would be a continuous spiritual communion to replace the physical touch. There is undoubtedly an important truth in this statement, but it loses sight of two things, namely, that Christ did invite His disciples to touch Him, and that His words were 'Hold not,' and not 'Touch not.' The word, as Westcott shows, means a '"holding," in the desire to retain.' He adds: 'The exact form implies further that she was already clinging to Him when He spoke.' If, then, our Lord is referring to a physical grasp of His feet or clothing, we cannot alter the meaning to a spiritual apprehension by faith; we cannot make our Lord say: 'You may not hold Me physically now, but after My Ascension you may hold Me spiritually.'

Then our Lord not only did not discourage, but permitted and even enjoined, His disciples, male and female, to touch His Resurrection body. Thus the women, who, at the command of the angel, had quitted the sepulchre to announce to the disciples His resurrection, are said to have been met by Him and to have 'held Him by the feet'; on the occasion of His appearance to the ten disciples He bids them 'handle' Him, in order to assure themselves that He has flesh and bones, as a spirit has not; and He invites Thomas to touch His wounds. These three passages entirely disprove the statement that His people were not to associate with Him on the old terms, or that they must now 'exchange the life and touch of sight for the higher and more spiritual relation of faith.' On the contrary, their faith is to be supported and

strengthened by the sight and touch of Him, in order that they may be the better able to bear witness of Him to others.

There is no need to search for hidden and obscure interpretations, for the meaning is transparently clear. What Christ says to Mary is not 'Do not touch me,' but 'do not cling to me.' And we see at once how this agrees with the language of the passage and with every part of it, and provides the only adequate, harmonious, and consistent interpretation of this utterance. 'There is no need to hold Me so firmly,' as Ebrard puts it, 'because My appearance is not a momentary one; I shall yet remain awhile on the earth.' Mary's fear was that He might vanish. 'Go rather to My brethren and tell them that I am ascending.' There is no absolute prohibition in the words 'Touch me not,' as though He were not to be held by her under any circumstances, now that He is risen from the dead; but only relatively, as a prohibition for the present moment, because He has other work for her to do. 'Do not cling to Me, but go,' is like, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice.' Under the circumstances, Mary is to be the bearer of the good news to the disciples rather than stay with Him. But she will enjoy intercourse with Him later when that is done, since He will remain on earth some time yet previous to His Ascension.[1]

2. There are several things of immense importance in this passage. First, that the life beyond the grave is in a real sense recognizably like the life on this side. Whatever the differences may be, they do not reach down to the roots of personality. Christ's first anxiety seems to be not to emphasize the change and the difference, but, if we may so put it, to emphasize the complete naturalness and the normality of the life beyond death. 'It is I myself.' Now this is profoundly significant. It has often been pointed out that even the greatest literature lamentably fails when it endeavours to portray the life beyond the grave. Have we any reason to believe, or to expect, that, in speaking of the risen Christ, the disciples would have succeeded in painting a convincing portrait where all the greatest artists have conspicuously failed? The greater the imagination in this realm, the greater the failure has been. The most impressive feature of this story is that imagination has no place in it at all: and that these men have painted a picture of the risen Christ which is wholly natural and attractive and convincing. The first woman who saw Jesus after His resurrection did not flee from Him, but clung to Him. That is greatly significant, in whatever light we regard the story.

We must also remember that, so far as the Gospels are concerned, there is no attempt to give a concerted or connected account of the Resurrection. These people were not marshalling evidence, but recording personal experiences. A polished story here would defeat its own ends. We get no connected and deliberate account until we come to Paul, who never claimed to be an eye-witness. 'That which I also received.' Paul was seeking to prove something. But these writers were not addressing themselves to people who sought or needed any proof of the Resurrection. They took it for granted. It was the explanation of everything—of the whole story of their own lives. They were not proving anything. They were narrating reminiscences: Paul was marshalling proofs, not least for people who said 'that there is no resurrection of the dead.'

3. There were two things that stood out overwhelmingly in the disciples' experience — two things that above all they had to make clear. The first was that Christ was the same. The second was that He had changed. There are apparent contradictions in the story. Now if these men had been clever enough to invent such a story, they would at least have been clever enough to achieve consistency. But they were content simply to state their experience. And the greatest achievement of their story lies in the fact that they had the sublime audacity to tell the world that Christ was substantially the same after death as before it, in direct contradiction of all literary precedent, and especially of their own racial prejudices and traditions on this subject. But though Christ was recognizably the same, He was manifestly different. The disciples were never troubled by the apparent inconsistency, and never attempted to reconcile or correlate the things they saw. And that is the supreme value of their witness. For if they had attempted to do so, they would have given us theories instead of facts.

Though the facts are profound and momentous, they are really very simple. They

[1] A. C. Downer, in *The Churchman*, xxvi. 282.

are that at first the change wrought by death in Christ was not incompatible with a continued relation to this world. The change was real enough to involve a momentary hesitation about personal identification—largely because the disciples were entirely unprepared for it, and indeed profoundly sceptical about it—but (and this is vital) not enough to prevent subsequent and ultimate identification. The Christian Church is built on that unshakable certainty. And historic Christianity is so unique and dynamic a phenomenon that it insistently demands a cause adequate to explain it. Sceptics talk grandiloquently of the 'laws of evidence'—but the laws of evidence at least include simple common sense. Mary saw Jesus. And He was the same—identical enough to make Mary happy. And what better evidence than that of a woman's heart satisfied and happy about her Dearest beyond death? There is a type of evidence better than mathematics. Facts that can transform life—that in the face of the final physical loss of Jesus, can send a whole company of followers, after the last 'parting,' back to Jerusalem 'with great joy'—are evidence, to say nothing of the fact that death also was transformed for them, 'to be with Jesus, which is far better.' Henceforth Jesus was 'with them all the days': but the outstanding fact of it all is that the reality of Jesus after death had the most unfading life-value for them ever known in this world.

¶ The conviction of the Resurrection alone might have been called illusion, but it was this conviction plus its consequences. Illusion shows itself to be such because it always crumbles at the touch of life. The real and the unreal for the moment may look alike, but they cannot result alike. It is not illusion but illumination which keeps men walking on a steady road toward increasing mastery of life. It is not fantasy but fact which makes men creators of a new and larger world of fact. And that is what the disciples became. Because of Easter Day, their own inner selves were re-created. Their inhibitions of fear dropped off like broken chains. They became not only men of faith, but builders of a new fellowship of faith.[1]

The other factor in the situation is really not so important for us—that Christ, though the same, was changed, and changing—not 'I ascend,' but 'I am ascending.' 'The change' takes us not merely beyond our vision, but beyond our present experience. It is not our immediate sphere. We have no sure data, nor do we need them. What we need is to know that the change leaves personality, identity, memory, relation, love unchanged. And that is the very foundation of the doctrine of Christ's resurrection.

4. An amazing change has come over scientific thought in these days concerning the relation of matter and spirit. To Herbert Spencer they were separated by an unbridgeable gulf. And so unconsciously he became the apostle of scientific materialism. To-day that is dead, largely because of our changed conception of matter. The bearing of all this on the Resurrection story is incalculable. Not only is no one to-day prepared to affirm the hostility of matter and spirit: no one is even prepared to dogmatize about the relation of matter and spirit. We know little about the ether or etheric bodies. More and more, scientists are coming to define matter in terms of motion and ether. Sir Oliver Lodge in *Modern Views of Electricity* says 'the internal aspect of motion is thought. Is it not reasonable to hold with Bishop Berkeley that thought underlies all motion?' Of the ether, Professor Dolbear, in *Matter, Ether, and Motion*, having declared that ether is non-atomic, frictionless, *and not subject to the laws of gravitation*, goes on, 'It does not seem proper to call it matter, though we might speak of it as substance.' And Gustav Le Bon adds: 'If we know very little about ether . . . it is no doubt the first source and ultimate end of things and the substratum of all worlds.' The line between 'matter' and 'spirit' grows very thin. 'Behold, we know not anything': but we are putting ourselves in the way of knowing more by ceasing to dogmatize. But, happily, facts are not dependent upon explanations. Nor do all the facts belong to the past. Who of us has not seen in some one the triumphant victory of the soul over the body? To interpret that in terms of chemical reactions, is simply stupid, and revolting. We cannot believe that the soul is the product of our emaciated perishing body when we have witnessed its triumphant supremacy and independency.

¶ The Right Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King, ex-Prime Minister of Canada, pays a striking

[1] W. R. Bowie, *The Master*.

tribute to his brother in an Introduction to the latter's book, *Nerves and Personal Power*. The book was written when Dr Macdougall King was dying of tuberculosis, bedridden and crippled with progressive muscular atrophy. 'When I saw my brother in September of 1920,' he says, 'he was well under way with the writing of his second work. Anything more wonderful or beautiful than the radiance of his spirit I have never known. Two months later, I retraced my steps to pay him a second visit, perchance that I might learn something more of the secret of his serenity. He spoke in the most direct manner of his new affliction, and in no uncertain terms of its probable course and duration. But there was neither bitterness nor complaint in his utterance. His spirit seemed to have surmounted all there was of infirmity in his physical condition. I understand now what is meant when we are told that "patient endurance is Godlike," and I think I have learned something of the love that is stronger than death.'

That is what our Lord is trying to teach us. There is no rebuke here. 'Mary,' He says, 'don't cling to Me like that.' 'I am not going away just yet: and I am not going away suddenly.' 'I am ascending.' Go and tell My disciples . . . now, and in all the ages to come, that 'Because I live, ye shall live also.'

Peace—In His Wounds

John xx. 19, 20.—'Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side.'

A GREAT soul can redeem his words from triviality. He takes the most conventional expressions, the small change of ordinary courtesy, which on the lips of other men mean nothing, and in his mouth they have such heart and substance that you go on cheered and bettered by his greeting. 'Peace' is one of the anointed words which hold rank in human speech by native dignity, but in Palestine it had been degraded to the level of a customary civility, with which the most indifferent acquaintances met and parted. And Jesus takes the word, humbled and impoverished, and makes such use of it that it is no longer trivial, but has the force of a command for their hearts.

It was, probably, in that very room that He had said, 'My peace I give unto you,' and the word had been remembered because it seemed to fight with all the facts. It was His last word before He led them out on the way to Gethsemane, to that night of confusion and alarm, and on through the bewilderment of the trial, and the growing uproar of the loud city, to the horror of Calvary, and the end. And now, when they sat in gloomy silence, with their sorrow, and their peril, and thoughts of the empty future making peace impossible, He comes again with His former word. It was a time when the common greeting might well have sounded like a wrong; peace—when there is no peace, and cannot be! But Jesus Christ, whose words are living creatures, calls them back from all such petulance. In its fullest latitude He meant His word, and thus made trial of their faith; for peace was there, indeed, within their reach, if only they had courage to lay hands upon it. And in our disquiets the Lord speaks to us in the same way, and we shall gain or miss the help of His presence according as we deal with the promise of His word.

1. What gave and gives the word worth is the nature of Him who spoke it. Coming from another, it would have been a vague good wish, a call not wholly to lose heart, and in face of such overwhelming calamities it would have been as idle to sustain their courage as the whistling of a scared country boy in the dark. But when Jesus uttered it, He brought a new element into the situation; for in His presence it was by no means impossible to be brave in spite of odds, which was, indeed, the lesson they had been studying for years. If their Master was with them they were not afraid; and therefore, as we read in Luke, He said, 'Behold my hands and my feet *that it is I myself*.' Where He was they had learned to find the stronger cause.

But it was not merely the Christ whom they had known, but a Christ with a new title to their trust and honour, who stood before them. 'He shewed them his hands and his feet,' and thus He took them back to His Cross and gave them courage there. There are many things in Jesus Christ which we cannot understand, mysteries of nature and relation in which He seems to withdraw Himself as we press on to know, but in the wounds of Christ there is

nothing that is not plain. Thomas was invited to touch where the nails had pierced, on which Pascal makes the comment, 'It is only in His wounds that you can touch Him.' For there is discovered all His mind towards men. He would not let Himself be parted from them, but entered into experiences which were not His own. He suffered as the guilty suffer though His soul was white. He suffered because the guilty suffer, and are left by men to bear the results of their ill-doings. There is in the world a law of retribution from which no man escapes; he cannot strike a blow which does not somehow come back upon himself. Men say, 'Serve him right,' and Jesus did not deny that it was right; only He was grieved in heart for the wretched who were left to what they had deserved. He wished to bring in a better law than that of retribution, to give a man what he had not worked for. As they were bearing what they had deserved, He accepted what He had not deserved in order to be their companion, and the dying thief is only one example of those who in the suffering Christ have found assurance for themselves. Here is One who has come to my help, One who is in a punishment which is mine and not His, and He is in it because it is mine, that where I might have looked only for despair and abandonment I should find a friend. The disciples had known the help of their Master's presence before; but when they looked to His wounds they recognized the strain which His heart had borne in making common cause with them, and they were persuaded that nothing now could separate from the love of Christ.

¶ Julian of Norwich has given expression to this idea in her characteristic way. She tells us that the crucifix she was watching when she thought she was dying seemed to her to be her Lord upon the Cross, who, as she gazed, looked down into the wound in His side, and exclaimed: 'Lo, how I loved thee.'

What does it mean, this wood
So stained with blood;
This tree without a root
That bears such fruit;
This tree without a leaf
So leaved with grief?

What does its height proclaim
Whose height is shame;
Its piteous arms outspread
Where death lies dead;
And in the midst a heart
Cleft wide apart?

Though fool, I cannot miss
The meaning, this:
My sin's stupendous price;
His sacrifice;
Where closest friendships end,
One friend—my friend.[1]

But there is a point even beyond that: in reminding them of His death He declared that death was overcome. He had come that night in the fullness of the glory of His resurrection. He had passed from the state of sorrow, suffering, sacrifice, agony, and shame into the eternal peace of heaven. He had fought His fight, He had mastered all the oppositions, and now, with nothing lying unsubdued, He speaks of peace. Even on the human level there is help in the settled quiet of a man who has reached beyond the ever troubled region of uncertainty. He has had struggle and perplexity, but now he has climbed to the high uplands where light is clear; and the tone of assured courage in his voice is a medicine to the heart. Through him men know that there is a victory, and they are bold to try again. And Jesus, who has risen out of the shadow of earth, speaks to us where we are of what He has attained. He does not end the struggles which are our education, He does not clear the doubts away through which we must come to certitude; but in His peace and victory there is promise of our own. 'Because I live,' He says, 'ye shall live also.' 'In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' That is the peace which He bestows, rooted in His own achievement.

2. The first gift which Jesus had for the disciples was the high confidence in their cause. Without that a Christian life cannot well be lived. He does not mean that we should live by sufferance, creeping timidly under the shadow of men's example; we are to have eyes and a conscience to know the truth, and courage to maintain it. The Christian Church has been built up by the fidelities of true men, and it gains no strength from those who have

[1] Harriet Kimball.

not courage to be faithful. These will come in thousands when the fashion once is set, but they bring nothing with them. They, certainly, can never be described as the city set on a hill which cannot be hid. Jesus Christ is the Lord of all the brave, and His gift is the high heart which sees its course and does not reckon odds. Whenever Jesus is revealed to the hearts of His disciples the day of shut doors and safe seclusion is past, and the day of plain speech, of frankness and courage and aggression, has come.

¶ Peden, the Covenanter, speaks for all right Christians when he says, 'For my part, I seek no more, if He bids me go.' And in one of his sermons the refrain is this: 'They sought no more than His commandment; they went and He carried them well through.'

¶ Milton's *Areopagitica* contains a strong, inspiring sentence concerning the heroic stand which he took against great odds: 'God intended to prove me, whether I durst take up alone a rightful cause against a world of disesteem, and found I durst.' This is the great poet's explanation of the heroic stand which he took against the social, political and religious opposition of his day.

'And found I *durst*.' What an instinctive response the quaint and noble old English word awakens! It is matched by that simple, modest word of Lindbergh in his story of his flight across the Atlantic. 'I decided,' he wrote, 'that I must not think any more about going back.' That was the moment of triumph.[1]

But the deepest hurt in the life of a man is not the ill his neighbour threatens; there is a controversy behind that, a war in his own conscience, a sense that his own life is wrong, and that God and he are somehow not at one. And 'Christ preached peace.' He brought forgiveness to men, the assurance of God's forgetfulness. To the most faulty He declares the goodwill of God, assuring them of a place in His heart from which all their sin and folly have not banished them. There are powers in God to part us from our sin, so that it can never rise against us any more; and these powers are centred in the Cross of Christ.

> Through all depths of sin and loss
> Drops the plummet of Thy Cross!
> Never yet abyss was found
> Deeper than that Cross could sound.[2]

[1] H. E. Luccock, *Preaching Values*, 212. [2] J. G. Whittier.

The Mission of the Ministry

An Ordination Address

John xx. 21.—'As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.'

'So send I you.' There can surely be no doubt as to the character and intention of this sending. In the light of the Master's utterance, its meaning stands quite clear. This mission is not something separate. It is not something new, or unprecedented, or particular. It is simply the application and the continuation of the very mission entrusted by the Father to our Lord Himself. 'As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.' The ministers of Christ are sent, that is to say, after the same manner in which our Lord was sent. They are sent to do the thing He had to do. They are sent to do it in the way He did it.

Let us consider two chief aspects of this mission. Our Lord was sent into the world to save mankind, and He was sent to do so partly by the perfect revelation of the Father, and partly by the free surrender of Himself to and for men in sacrifice. These were the characteristic features of His ministry. And it is mainly in these two things—in revelation and in sacrificial service—that the ministry of those who in their turn are sent by Him consists.

1. *Revelation.*—It is only 'the vision of the ideal,' said Bishop Westcott, that 'guards the monotony of work from becoming the monotony of life.' And the words are not without their application in the present day. Our age, immersed in multitudinous material interests, has to a certain extent lost touch with the things invisible. It is not convinced supremely and emphatically of the truths which it seems to believe. Men do not grasp the gospel. They do not actually realize it, and all that it implies. They are not in downright earnest with the verities of the spirit, as they are about the social and political questions of the hour. The vision of the Divine, so vividly apprehended in certain periods of history, has in a measure faded. And what are the results? Think of the unillumined dullness which besets so many lives, with their dreary mechanical round of uninspired routine. Think of the dead monotony. Look at the hard, sad faces of the

toiling millions as they plod on endlessly, day after day, under one blank, colourless stretch of leaden sky. Are there not here results?

'The more I think of it,' said Ruskin, 'I find this conclusion more impressed on me, that the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way.' But just that is the privilege and the function of the ministers of Christ. They come to do for men the greatest thing that any man can do for men. Seers themselves, and penetrated with their vision, they come to make others see. They are sent by Jesus Christ to impart their own experience of the grand realities—to make men feel the power and comfort of a Real Presence; to make them hear God's footsteps sounding all along the way; to teach them to sing His psalm, 'I have set the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved.' In the midst of human blindness, sorrow, sin, despondency, they uplift the great conceptions of the Perfect and the Divine. And to every burdened man they carry the saving message of a heavenly Friend and Companion who is ever at his side. No matter how cabined and confined he be in materialities, no matter how drudging his work, how narrow his outlook; for him, too, there are songs.

¶ Not often have I been more moved than once, acting as Moderator in a vacant congregation, when the report of a deputation who had been hearing a minister with a view to a call was given in by a prominent lawyer in that city. No man could well have been more shy and embarrassed and afraid that he must be misunderstood. For it appeared that, while waiting in the church for the service to begin, he had felt himself challenged by Christ Himself. 'So you are here to choose a minister,' He seemed to say; 'and on what grounds do you presume to set up as a judge? Have you yourself been so peculiarly effective in your Christianity?' Hearing which, I for one leant forward, feeling that this was a man whose opinion counted. And when it came it was to this effect, that the service was entirely worthy, and the sermon quite masterly, and the minister's personality unusually attractive; and yet, he added, our report is we should go no further. 'The fact is,' he said, 'I for one am set down among earthly and material and sometimes rather squalid things; these make my life; and the Church services are my one chance. Unless I see God there, I shall forget about Him altogether, shall lose sight of Him, amid the din and dust and press of life. And while this preacher taught me, interested me, even fascinated me, while he was preaching I had given me none of that needed sense of God.'[1]

2. *Sacrificial Service.*—But along with the revelation there must also be the sacrifice and the service. 'A religious,' said St Francis once, 'only preacheth well inasmuch as he worketh well, for the preacher is known by his works.' Our calling, with its wonderful horizons, its immeasurably lofty firmaments and doctrines, has also its earthly duties, its little everyday fidelities, its readiness to help all those within its reach. It is service. It is sacrifice. It is going about doing good. It is taking the basin and towel, and washing the dust-stained feet. It is the Cross, and the love which gladly gives itself that another may be blessed. Here is the second aspect of our mission, and it is inseparable from the first. We are sent to teach: we are sent to serve. But 'the sublimest argument ends in service, and service itself is the sublimest argument.'

¶ People think we missionaries go out to those parts of the world, and from morning to night do nothing but preach sermons. It is quite a mistake. It is not the preaching of a sermon so much as the living the life that tells on the native heart. It is by living a Divine life, by striving to follow in the footsteps of Him who came to express the Father's love, that we win the heart of the savage, and raise him up to become a true man in Jesus Christ.[2]

Now if we are sent at all, we are sent to take a share in the very ministry of our Lord Himself. Our service represents and continues His service. Our labour is indissolubly joined to His. We are actually brought into a partnership with Him who 'came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' And what a tremendous obligation that fellowship lays upon us! We remember, with shame for ourselves, how utterly Christ gave Himself. Of Tissot's 365 drawings of His life, no fewer than 310 are concerned with the ministry and passion: and

[1] A. J. Gossip, *The Hero in Thy Soul*, 243.
[2] *James Chalmers: Autobiography and Letters*, 274.

yet even that proportion is inadequate to express the place which service occupied in the life of the Great Pastor. Why, surely His every act, His every word and thought, was service. The whole of His life was one long sacrificing of Himself for others. And when there was nothing further that His life could give, He gave the life itself a willing sacrifice in death.

If we are really called into Christ's redemptive process, we are bound in our measure to give ourselves as freely as He gave Himself in His. Never will He who sends accept our hands half full. He asks us for our all—body, soul and spirit—all that we are, and all that we hope to be, and all that God's grace shall enable us to be. He asks for entire surrender of the entire man to His work. And He could not ask for less. For as is the Sender, so must be the sent.

¶ General Booth was once asked what was the secret of his wonderful life of service. He answered, 'If there is any secret it is that, from the moment I first gave myself to Christ, He has had all of me there is.'

Through us the Son of Man still gladly gives Himself for the sons of men. Through us He comes again and again to seek and to save the lost. Through us He lightens human sorrows and temptations. Through us He bears the burdens of the heavy-laden and carries them to the Father. For the Saviour of the world still saves the world through saviours; and saviours are they who sacrifice themselves for others' sakes.

It is natural, when we meditate on the responsibility of our office, that we should be appalled at its weight and magnitude. Who indeed are we, that we should bear God's revelations? Who are we, that we should dare to claim a part in the ministry of Christ? But again, when we turn our thoughts to the Divine sending, may not the words of weakness change on our lips into the words of strength? We are sent by Christ Himself, and we should ever remember that. There is Someone at the back of us and our poor wisdom: there is Someone behind our service and fidelity. We are not working alone. We throw our toil into a great spirit realm where a mighty Power is waiting, who catches it up, and gives to it a shape, and makes of it a use we never could. It is Jesus Christ Himself who sends. How then can we despair, and how can we be afraid, knowing that all is perfected as well as planned by Jesus Christ? Shall we not rather exclaim with St Paul, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me'? Shall we not rather say with St Teresa, 'Well do I know how little I can do, but close to Thee, if Thou dost not leave me, I can do everything'?

Can I in my weakness
Stand as in Thy stead?
I, in might or meekness,
Needing to be led?
'*Yes, for I have sent thee,*
Laid on thee My power;
Be, by what is lent thee,
Equal to thine hour.'[1]

The Remission of Sins

John xx. 21-23.—'Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.'

The main outlines of the scene are of course familiar to us all. The disciples had gathered themselves together in the Upper Room, and behind locked doors they discussed the only subject that filled their minds. As they conversed Jesus stood in their midst and greeted them with the usual Jewish salutation, 'Peace be unto you.' 'They were terrified,' writes St Luke, 'and affrighted, and supposed that they beheld a spirit.' But fear soon gave way to joy; and as they surrendered themselves to unrestrained gladness, once more the risen Saviour gave them the blessing of peace. Then came the great commission—that commission which is the inheritance of the Church in all ages and among all peoples. The disciples were 'sent' by Christ, even as Christ had been 'sent' by His Father. The commission therefore was no new one, but was an extension of His own. And then He breathed on them, and bestowed on them the Holy Spirit, and gave them power and authority to 'forgive' and to 'retain' sins.

1. The commission was entrusted to the Christian Church as a whole and not to any

[1] S. J. Stone.

separate section of it. There were others at that historic gathering besides the Apostles; there were women present at it as well as men. The gift was not to one more than another. The privilege and the responsibility were committed to the whole body of believers. In other words, the power of forgiveness and retention is the heritage of the Christian Church, and not only of the Christian ministry.

The words of the commission are described by Bishop Westcott as the 'Charter of the Christian Church.' They define its mission; they confirm its authority; they reveal its life. The disciples were to carry on the work which Christ had begun before His Passion. Hitherto He had given them the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, in order that they might open that treasury and dispense its gifts. He had given to them the power to bind and loose—to draw up rules and canons for the government of the Infant Church. To this authority He now adds the post-resurrection commission to remit or to retain sin. This is a result of the preaching of the gospel. Whenever and wherever the gospel is faithfully proclaimed, whether it be in a pulpit, or in a book, or in conversation by the wayside, we remit or retain sin. 'As we, in our different places, bring home to the consciences of others the import of Christ's work, so far we set them free from the bondage in which they are held.' But so far as that message is of no avail it brings about in itself the retention of sin. The preaching of Christ's gospel cannot leave men as it found them. The Jews were worse men for knowing Christ, just as the disciples were the better for knowing Him.

All about us are the victims of sin, some conscious of their bondage, some unconscious of it; some hardened to its tyranny, some fresh and new to it; some its willing slaves, some its sad bondsmen, some its indifferent servants. Our commission is to bring them within that great system of blessing which flows like some strong stream from the Cross of Christ. It cannot be done without their own co-operation; it cannot be done without their own desire to receive what that Cross alone can bestow; but it cannot be done except the gospel of the Crucified is preached to them, unless His invitation is extended to them and urged upon them. So far as we bring them to the Saviour, that His grace may embrace and restore and regenerate them, do we succeed in exercising this power of forgiveness. To apply the law of the Atonement—that is our historic commission. To bring men within that law is our privilege, our responsibility, our duty, our call.

The Pharisees were right when they asked, 'Who can forgive sins, but God only?' Man can only preach and declare God's forgiveness. The penitent alone can make the absolution valid. When Nathan convinced David of his sin, and he repented, he absolved him with the words: 'The Lord hath put away thy sin.'

2. 'As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you.' Our first question, then, must be, What was the purpose of the Father's sending the Son? Was it only to preach the gospel of reconciliation? The answer is contained potentially in that declaration at the close of the prologue to this Gospel: 'No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' He was sent that He might be the Manifester of the Father—that men through Him might see the Father. Even so are the disciples sent that they may manifest the Christ. We are called upon to embody in our own life His principles. The world must see in us the spirit of love and forgiveness which are the marks of our Master.

¶ It was said of Bishop King of Lincoln that early in life he set before him as his ideal, so to live his life as to prove in his own person that the teaching of Christ was true.

All love has redemptive power. The same kind of power that attaches to the Divine forgiveness attaches also in a less perfect measure to human forgiveness. It is given to us by our faith and our forgiveness to free men from their chains, or by withholding that faith and forgiveness to bind their chains more firmly about them. In the history of the early Christian Church at Corinth we are told that one member of that Church lapsed into grievous sin, and it was decided that he must be put out of the fellowship. A little later, however, St Paul wrote again telling them to stay their hand. They should rather forgive and comfort him, lest such an one be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Human hands were to be held out to save him from sinking into the gulf of his own self-despair. And we see that it is not only

according to our faith that we are saved, but also according to our faith that we save.

¶ Ian Maclaren in one of his short stories tells of the way in which a well-known business man was saved by his friends. He had become involved in serious difficulties and was obliged to declare himself bankrupt. Fortunately for himself there were in a little group among whom he lived a number who were convinced of his sincerity and integrity, and who banded themselves together to save him and set him on his feet once more. When in the end their efforts were successful, when the bankrupt's debts were paid and his good name restored, a supper party was held in celebration of the happy event. As they sat down at the table and talked together the hero of the evening turned to his friends and said: 'There is something in the Bible somewhere about being saved by faith. Well,' said he, 'I was saved that way, but it was not my faith; it was the faith of the men who sit round this table.'

¶ Canon Peter Green tells how a fellow-curate had set himself to save a man who had given way to drink. One day he followed him into a public-house and with great difficulty persuaded him to leave it, only to find himself overwhelmed with a torrent of drunken abuse. 'It looks to me,' said the man, 'as if you'd never leave me alone.' 'No,' said the curate, 'I never shall, not while we're both above ground.' That proved the turning-point: 'If I'm worth that to any man,' the man said to his wife afterwards, 'I'm worth something yet. I'll have another try.'

Jesus saved men by believing in them and by helping them to believe that purity and goodness were still possible to them. His was a love which pushed past all the worthlessness to find the better self within; a love like that which reached the close-fisted little publican, Zacchæus; a love like that which triumphed over her that was a sinner, in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Christ took the first step, going out to greet repentance and to call it forth, kindling faith by His faith. This is the way of the Master, and the servant must tread it too. It is by acting as He did that our love may be redemptive. We make people trustworthy by trusting them. It is surely for us to grasp and in all sorts of ways to apply this great teaching of Jesus to the whole round of our life, international, social and individual.

3. As we realize our responsibility we say, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' It is beyond our own powers. It is a miracle which only the Divine grace can work. Let us put it to ourselves. How can man believe in the forgiveness of God unless first that forgiveness is interpreted and mediated through man's forgiveness? 'God's possible is taught by His world's living,' said Elizabeth Barrett Browning. How can we believe that God is love if there is no human love anywhere near through which it may be interpreted and made clear? In the Acts of the Apostles we find the story of one, Ananias. As Saul went along the Damascus road with authority to drag Christians to prison and to death, we read that, after he had met Jesus, there came to him this man Ananias, his first friend. Saul had been his would-be murderer, yet what did Ananias say? 'Brother Saul,' he began. It was a word confirming the word that was already making itself heard within the man's soul. It was the voice of human forgiveness sealing and making sure the forgiveness of God. 'Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them.' The work of the minister? Yes. But in this thing we are all God's ministers, sent forth to proclaim His love and forgiveness.

¶ Forgiveness is love in action, and love means sin-bearing. Forgiveness can only be accomplished by sin-bearing, and sin-bearing means a cross. . . . If the Church is a Church indeed, it is a body of sin-bearing people: people who love with the love of God that is shed abroad in their hearts, and who, because they love, are compelled to bear the burden of the world's sins. They are a body of people who can forgive because they are forgiven, who have been loved into being lovers.[1]

The Church the World's Conscience

John xx. 23.—'Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.'

1. It is no doubt the duty of the Church to minister to the troubled conscience, and that with Divine authority. But in every age there has been a large category of sins that have never troubled the conscience at all. They have even been reckoned as virtues. What

[1] G. A. Studdert Kennedy, *The Wicket Gate*.

inquisitor was ever troubled in conscience by his cruelty, or by any part of his attitude to heresy? Did Fénelon ever confess his persecutions, or was Cromwell ever conscience-stricken by the massacre of Drogheda? We do not see the sins of the age to which we belong. Yet they are perhaps of all sins the most deadly. For they are the very atmosphere in which our souls move, and they constitute that spirit of the world, which is enmity against God. The sins which wound conscience most commonly are the sins of the flesh. The passions of anger or sex by which our lower nature is roused fill us with shame as soon as the storm is over, and we seek to rehabilitate ourselves. It may be doubted whether the cheat or liar ever experiences the same kind of shame—at all events before detection.

¶ At any excess or perversion of a natural appetite their lyre sounds of itself with relishing denunciations; but for all displays of the truly diabolic—envy, malice, the mean lie, the mean silence, the calumnious truth, the back-biter, the petty tyrant, the peevish poisoner of family life—their standard is quite different.[1]

The commission, however, of our Lord to His Church cannot possibly cover anything less than the whole field of human sin, not as it is measured by laws of casuistry, but sin as it is in relation to God. In fact, He leaves to His Church His own attitude to sin. 'As the Father hath sent me, so send I you. Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.' It is manifest that, if these words had been the whole of our Lord's charge to His disciples, the task which He left them was impossible of fulfilment. For among the factors which make for sin no small part is played by ignorance. 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' In those early dissensions between Peter and Paul, or between Paul and Barnabas, who was to determine which of the two Apostles was in the wrong, and which was doing God's will? And yet upon the decision of right and wrong between the disputants turned the binding or loosing of whole codes of law upon the conscience of the Church in all lands for all time. The authority which Christ gave to His Church was indeed, in the first instance, judicial; but, like all other judicial authority, it became, of necessity, legislative. The power to forgive sins or retain them was in fact a power to make sins or unmake them.

2. Hence the necessity in the commission for the words 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost.' The Church could be Christ's vicegerent only if and so far as it was indwelt by the Holy Spirit; and so far as it was filled with the Holy Spirit it was Christ's vicegerent upon earth. It is from our Lord Himself and from His conduct that we must learn how this marvellous duty is to be fulfilled. The Church was to be the conscience of the world. What else is the work of conscience but to forgive and to retain sins? It was to be a Divinely illuminated conscience, restricted not to one sphere of human activity, but bringing into judgment the whole of human conduct throughout the whole world. To the whole Church it is given to create health-giving opinion as to right and wrong, to manifest before the whole world the life of healthy relation towards God. That was precisely the work which our Lord did by His life, as distinct from the great work of Atonement, which He fulfilled by His death. His life was the life of healthy relation towards His Divine Father. We speak of His teaching and we speak of His ministry. But when we think of all that He might have taught us, or compare His teaching for minuteness with that of His Rabbinic contemporaries, or for logical completeness with the teaching of St Paul, we see at once that He was not in the ordinary sense of the word a Teacher. We speak also of His ministry, the ministry of reconciliation. Yet only twice is it recorded that He used the words 'Thy sins be forgiven thee.' Even of His personal dealing with individual souls the mention is quite scanty; and yet how unspeakably precious such records must have been to the early Church. Why are they not more numerous? Let it be suggested that they were not the chief work of His earthly life. Then what was the greatest work of His life? Was it not this—to forgive and to retain sins by the witness of a Divine life lived among men; to put right and wrong on a new basis; to reveal sins where no sin had been suspected before; to reveal possibilities of holiness and of communion with God, such as the human heart had never conceived; to manifest the blackness of egoism in all its forms as the mother and fountain of all sins? 'I came not to do my own will, but the will of

[1] R. L. Stevenson.

him that sent me, and to finish his work.' 'I have glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do.' This attitude towards sin, this positive attitude—not a string of negations like the old law, but the manifestation of the joy of obedience—was surely the characteristic feature of our Lord's life as distinguished from His death. Here may we not find the nobler and more exalting conception of the Apostolic commission?

3. To pass from generalities to the actual facts of life, is not every one of us daily forgiving and retaining sins? What else is the public opinion of our schools and universities and social circles but a very practical form of excommunication from or of admission to communion in the amenities of daily life? To that public opinion we each of us contribute our share. We ratify its sentences or we denounce them. We confirm its applause or we refuse to confirm it.

¶ I was glad to row in my College boat, but I declined the beer and port wine, which were at that time considered essential to training. 'No,' I said, 'I will leave the boat, but I will not take drink!' I was strengthened by a firm assurance that I was obeying the commandment of God. Strange to say, five of the eight men followed my example. The Common-room butler, with the licence of an old servant, looked in at our meals and said derisively: 'Toast and water! you'll be bumped—no boat can go up on toast and water!' It was that year that our boat rose from the bottom of the river and started on its career which at last put it at the head.[1]

Confronted with ethical problems, ancient and modern, we are daily forgiving and retaining sins. Does God confirm our judgments? Those whose sins we forgive, are they forgiven? Those whose sins by us are retained, are they retained? The libertine in whose defence of vice we have, like cowards, acquiesced, does he receive acquittal from God? The social worker whose uncouthness is more intolerable than vice—is he an outcast before God? Does it ever occur to us that the Holy Spirit is our inheritance as a child of God, for this very purpose that our approvals and condemnations may be echoes of the mind of God? It is to be feared that there is no field of duty in which human laziness and unwillingness to be at the pain of thinking are so constantly manifested. It is so easy to borrow the judgments of others, so hard to acquire the mind of Christ. Yet what is there more worthy of achievement? What measure of earthly success or reward is comparable with the acquirement of true heavenly-mindedness? For true heavenly-mindedness is not the cultivation of dreamy sentimentality. It is learning to see things whole, and to see them true. It is learning to look at the world as God looks at it. In this school no human teacher can be our master. We must receive the Spirit which is of God if we are to know the things which are freely given us of God.

[1] R. F. Horton, *An Autobiography*, 165.

Our Lord and the Doubter

John xx. 25.—'The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe' (R.V.).

1. In this twentieth century there is none of the minor characters described in the New Testament more interesting than Thomas. His whole mental and moral attitude was extraordinarily like that which, in the case of many thoughtful and serious-minded people, present-day influences tend to produce. It was the attitude of a man who was thoroughly faithful and true at heart, who felt keenly the need of religion, who wished to believe, but who was determined not to allow this wish to obscure his perception of truth and falsehood. A straightforward, intellectually honest man, who resolutely refused to ignore facts or to evade difficulties. He wanted to accept Christ as his Lord and God, but the very intensity of his want made him sensitive to the demand for satisfactory evidence. This evidence must be of a character which would justify belief. Unless it was forthcoming he could not pretend to himself or to others that he was convinced.

¶ There is a statue of St Thomas by the great sculptor, Thorwaldsen. It shows a man grave and thoughtful in mien and bearing; in his hand he carries a measuring-line. Something very like that figure Thomas must have been; it makes satisfyingly complete the fragmentary

segments of the character revealed in the Gospels. Certainly the measuring-line is correct. No device carried by any of the saints, as art portrays them, is more apposite than that measuring-line. In religion Thomas was a measurer, not a mystic; not a lyrical, but a logical spirit. Of him are Longfellow's lines true and exact:

> We have not wings, we cannot soar;
> But we have feet to scale and climb
> By slow degrees, by more and more.[1]

Two previous notices of Thomas bear out this description of his character. The first was on the occasion when word was brought to Christ of Lazarus' death, and He announced his intention of going to Bethany, the place where this had taken place. It was a dangerous project, because of the hostility of the Jews there, and His disciples endeavoured to dissuade Him from going. 'Master,' they said, 'the Jews have of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?' But Christ persisted in His determination, and then Thomas spoke—'Let us also go, that we may die with him.' They were the words of a brave and loyal man. He had joined himself to Christ, and was willing to take the risks of his companionship. He realized the danger of the journey; he did not realize what good end it could serve. But he was ready to go all the same. His head told him not to go, his heart told him that he ought to go; and he followed the dictates of the latter, and disregarded those of the former. But he was under no delusion. He did not pretend to be convinced of the wisdom of the proposed project. But, wise or not wise, he was not going to desert his Friend in the hour of danger.

The second occasion on which Thomas appears is in connection with that wonderful discourse of Christ's recorded in St John xiv., in which He predicted His death and resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit. He spoke at a very high level. His disciples could not have understood at all clearly what He meant. But for the most part they were acquiescent. They were willing to wait for more light. Not so Thomas. He wanted to understand, and to understand now. The others might remain silent when Christ said 'Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.' But Thomas could not accept this statement without question. He was not conscious of possessing such knowledge, and he did not hesitate to say so. 'Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how can we know the way?' Christ did not enlighten him at the time. On the contrary, He made further statements, quite as difficult to understand as those to which Thomas took exception. But we are not told that Christ rebuked him or showed any resentment at his interruption. The time had not come for answering his question, but it was an honest question, deserving respectful treatment, and such treatment Christ accorded to it.

2. We come now to the third occasion on which Thomas plays a prominent part—that described by the Evangelist in this twentieth chapter. On Easter Day, when Jesus appeared to the disciples, Thomas was not with his colleagues. No reason is given for his absence then. It could not, however, have been due to any estrangement between him and the other disciples, for they tell him what had happened. They said unto him, 'We have seen the Lord.' Thomas's reply is characteristic: 'Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.' The whole scene of the Crucifixion had evidently imprinted itself vividly on his imagination. The horror of the thing still oppressed him; it was his Friend, One whom he had loved, One for whom he had been willing to face death, whom he had seen slowly tortured to death. His fellow-disciples now declared that He had risen again, and had appeared to them. But the declaration savoured of hysteria and fevered fancy, natural at a time of such strain. He could not accept it without further proof. He must see with his own eyes, and, moreover, he must feel with his own hands. The evidence of sight alone would not be sufficient, for he was conscious that he, too, was overwrought, and might easily be imposed upon by a phantom of his own imagination. But though the sense of sight might be deceived, deception was less likely if to its evidence could be added that of the sense of touch. Evidence of the latter kind was necessary to carry conviction. 'Except I put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not

[1] A. Boyd Scott, *The Twelve Take Stock of Us*, 86.

believe.' It was not that he did not wish to believe, but belief was impossible for him unless the conditions of its attainment were satisfied.

'After eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them.' He had not separated himself from them, nor had they excluded him from their society. He was unconvinced, and said so; but he was one with them in sympathy and desire. He shared in their loyalty and love to their Lord, and this, notwithstanding his unbelief, bound him to them and them to him.

(1) There is a message here from the experience of Thomas. And first to the doubter. Because you have misgivings with regard to this or that article of the Christian creed, because you cannot see your way to its honest and whole-hearted acceptance, do not let that fact cause you to cut yourself off from intimate association with your fellow-churchmen. So long as you retain your loyalty to the Person of Christ you do well to keep in close touch with the society which is the organized expression of that loyalty. Imbibe its spirit and identify yourself with its aims and activities as far as you can. By doing so you will gradually establish the conditions which will make complete conviction possible for you. If, on the other hand, you hold yourself aloof you run great risk of losing even that measure of belief you have already attained.

¶ Let a man put himself under orders to maintain his place in the muster, above all to drive through his hard and inflexible thoughts with the ploughshare of prayer, and, as the minister who leads the worship prays, say, 'This is *my* prayer; I insist that it is my prayer!' Remember what Francis of Sales says in one place of 'spiritual dryness': 'Blessed Angela de Foligno says that the prayer which is most acceptable to God is that which we make by force and constraint, the prayer to which we apply ourselves not for any relish we find in it, nor by inclination, but purely to please God; to which our will carries us against our inclinations, violently forcing its way through the midst of the dryness and repugnance which oppose it.'

(2) And, on the other hand, we of the congregations of Christ must see to it that we do not look askance at the man who is embarrassed by honest doubts. If he is with us in heart and sympathy we must hesitate long before excluding him from our fellowship because his views in this or that respect seem somewhat unorthodox. Orthodoxy in conduct is the surest road to orthodoxy in belief, for true belief is but another name for the principles of true conduct. It is our duty to help him along this road, not so much by argument as by sympathy, and kindliness, and readiness in loyal co-operation. There is, of course, a point at which unorthodoxy makes such co-operation impossible—a point at which the status of Church membership becomes untenable for an honest man. But we ought to be quite sure that he has reached that point before we exclude him from the circle of our corporate sympathy. We must take care not to be too rigid or exacting. Better to err on the side of charity than on that of strictness.

3. 'Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.' The words as thus translated in the Revised Version convey a graphic impression of the incident. The disciples are assembled together, the doors are shut, Jesus appears, He stands in their midst and speaks. The event is sudden and unexpected and unaccountable. 'Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.' The concluding words are not a very adequate rendering of the original. The words translated 'be not' indicate a process which is going on rather than a state already achieved. They might perhaps be better translated 'become not'; while the words translated 'faithless' and 'believing' are in the Greek in exact antithesis to each other. The sense of the whole passage is something like this: 'Become not unbelieving, but believing.' It implies that Thomas was not yet an unbeliever, but was in the way of becoming such. The time had come for him to be warned that he was subject to this tendency, and called to face it and refuse to be dominated by it.

The warning holds good for all time. Most active-minded people pass through a phase of religious uncertainty and doubt. It is natural for young men to question their inherited beliefs, and it is well that they should do so, provided that their questionings are sincere and pertinent. But as life goes on the questioning habit ought to be replaced by one of purposeful action based on settled conviction. The middle-aged

man who does not know where he is or what he is aiming at, who cannot make up his mind with regard to ultimate questions, who has no fixed and dominating point of view, who thinks this to-day and that to-morrow, is a man who has missed his way. He is of little use to himself or to others. Scepticism and agnosticism belong to the pathology of human nature, not to its healthy and natural development. It is the men of strong beliefs and clear inspirations who make the difference; they are the real makers of the age in which they live. That is a truth which every young man does well to lay to heart. If we are to live and grow as men, and to accomplish our destiny as men, we must attain to strong belief. Without such belief moral and spiritual progress is impossible. The mere questioner, the mere critic and caviller, can never attain to anything worth attaining. Better a mistaken belief than none; better be a fanatic than an agnostic. Fanaticism is the mark of one-sided development. Agnosticism is the negation of all development; it is the sign and outcome of moral and mental anæmia, of lack of manhood and vital power.

¶ 'Until a man has found God,' and 'been found by God,' says H. G. Wells in *Mr Britling*, 'he begins at no beginning, he works to no end. He may have his friendships, his partial loyalties, his scraps of honour. But all these things fall into place, and life falls into place, only with God.'

4. 'Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.' Notice the character of this response. It is immediate and spontaneous. It is presented not as the outcome of any process of reasoned argument, but as a sudden act of instinctive recognition. The implication is that the ocular demonstration which Thomas had demanded, and which had been vouchsafed, was its occasion rather than its cause. This demonstration would have left a man of a different mental and moral disposition unmoved. It might have impressed his imagination, and aroused his intellectual curiosity, but it would not necessarily have produced faith in the New Testament sense of the term. For Thomas it cleared away certain intellectual embarrassments, and left his faith faculty free to act. But that activity is in itself ultimate, and self-originated, and incapable of analysis. It is as deep calling to deep, the response of life to life, of the Divine life within us to the Eternal and Personal Source from which it comes. 'My Lord and my God.' It is the expression of the ultimate fact of human experience, the experience of soul-thirst quenched, of soul-satisfaction achieved, of soul-fruition attained.

¶ Faith is not belief in fact, demonstration, or promise; it is sensibility to the due influence of the fact, something that enables us to act upon the fact, the susceptibility to all the strength that is in the fact, so that we are controlled by it. Nobody can properly define this. All we can say is that it comes by the grace of God, and that failure to see the truth is not so lamentable as failure to be moved by it.[1]

Then Came Jesus

John xx. 26.—'Then came Jesus, the doors being shut.'

It was evening. The darkness had fallen. All the doors by which any might find access from the outside were carefully barred. The shutters were closed: none might know what was passing behind those doors. For the thoughts and words of the men within were too bitter and dark for the mocking world without to know and scorn. The only way to escape awkward questions and the piercing glances of a cruel world was to bar the doors and shut out the past. And the doors were shut, shut against the outer world, shut also in the face of the possible return of Christ.

1. Strange it is to reflect that the door of entrance was first closed against the coming of Christ, not by His enemies, but by His professing disciples. It was the first, but not the last, time that the doors were closed in the face of the Church's Head by the heads of the Church. Over and over again have blind and faithless and ignorant Church leaders closed the door, seeking to deny the presence and comfort of the Christ of God to all save such as they thought fit to grant it to. Though they have shut fast every door against the honest man, Jesus has come to His disciple, the doors being shut, as He always does.

That is a great announcement in the Gospel of St Luke, the knell of arrogant orthodoxy, of

[1] Mark Rutherford.

self-satisfied traditionalism, and all manners and forms of religion that have not the stamp of freedom and fearless truth. 'In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituræa and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.' What a reversal of the standards of men! Over and over again it has happened. In the reign of the Emperor Charles V., Prince Frederick being Elector of Saxony, Duke George being in power, in the papacy of Leo X., the Word of God came unto Martin Luther, the son of the miner, in Erfurt. Or again, in the reign of Henry VIII., the Earl of Arran being Regent of Scotland, in the cardinalate of Beaton, the Word of God came unto John Knox in St Andrews. No matter how tightly barred the doors, no matter how bare the desert, the eternal Word of God comes where there is a true and honest heart to receive Him. He comes through all the doors which the hand and will of man have closed, and speaks to the faithful His own word of peace.

2. There are other doors—doors which a man has shut with his own hand, barring them against any who would come in to disturb the brooding of his inmost soul. Perhaps we, too, harbour a sense of disappointment, a feeling of failure and of loss. We, too, knew that Nazarene in wonderful old-time days, when His presence gave us peace and His word assurance. But we let them take and crucify Him. We let Him go out of our lives, and now we know not really whether He be alive or not.

By an effort of will and of determined forgetfulness we try to persuade ourselves that our most vital and momentous moods are mere tricks of sentiment. We avoid silence, and quietness, and meditation, and the profundities of worship. We shun the hours of the hushed spirit and deepened thought. We are determined to give the impression that we think and know that so far as we are concerned Jesus Christ has passed out of our lives and thoughts for evermore. And so well do we bar the doors that we successfully persuade the world that we have no further fears and visits from the tremendous spiritual realities.

But He comes. Through every apparent obstacle—material, intellectual, moral—Christ finds His way. If through fear of consequences, or borne down by the difficulties of belief, men seek refuge in temporary expedients, sooner or later they find themselves face to face with Him. In the crises of individual souls, in the strange vicissitudes of human history, over and over again, when it seemed that men had done with Him, 'then came Jesus, the doors being shut.'

¶ We recall in the life of George Eliot how she tells us that she translated Strauss's *Life of Jesus* till she was Strauss-sick; working upon the book, translating the passages that dissolved the Christian faith into nebulous shadows, with a crucifix before her, and only able to continue her toil by an effort of the will which triumphed over her spiritual sensibilities. And yet this same woman, a little later, is painting for us Dinah Morris preaching on the village green and announcing this great gospel, this evangelical message, which came, not only from the lips of Dinah Morris, but from the heart of Dinah Morris's creator: 'Our blessed Saviour has shown us what God's heart is, and what are His feelings towards us.' George Eliot could not escape the Christ.

¶ Two years after the Armistice a young man walked into my study and said, 'Do you know me?' I said that I did. 'Well,' he went on, 'I've been trying, since I left the army, to live without God. I can't do it. It simply won't do. So now I've come to you for help to live for Him.' That is ten years ago, and to-day I do not know a better man or a better churchman. Now for something more recent. A young business man, in a good position, came to me. He said that he had lived as a complete agnostic for years. And then, just as it might have been someone touching him in the street and saying, 'I want you,' God touched him. And certainly something wonderful has happened, for I never knew a man more completely changed.[1]

Do not let us delude ourselves into thinking that His coming means nothing. It will mean a big change in our lives and destiny if we let Him abide, and it will have an eternal issue if we do not. Sometimes we wish that we could flee from His presence and ignore His demands. The Cross comes to every man with a challenge;

[1] Canon Peter Green, in *A Man's Job*, ed. B. K. Cunningham.

and there is no escape from the response. Jesus stands in the midst—a Presence that is not to be put by. The late George Tyrrell, in a letter written before one of his controversies with his ecclesiastical superiors, said, 'How glad one would be to get out of it all! but there is that strange Man on His Cross who drives me back again and again.' Often and often we are like crying out, 'What have I to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to torment me?' But a thousand times worse the torments and tortures of the life that tries to keep Him out!

If love should count you worthy, and should deign
One day to seek your door and be your guest,
Pause! ere you draw the bolt and bid him rest,
If in your old content you would remain;
For not alone he enters; in his train
Are angels of the mist, the lonely guest
Dreams of the unfulfilled and unpossessed,
And sorrow, and Life's immemorial pain.
He wakes desires you never may forget,
He shows you stars you never saw before,
He makes you share with him, for evermore,
The burden of the world's divine regret.
How wise you were to open not! and yet,
How poor if you should turn him from the door![1]

3. 'Then came Jesus, the doors being shut.' It was the time of the disciples' greatest need, the hour of their deepest perplexity. *Then* cometh Jesus.

Jesus waits till the recognized and acknowledged hour of a man's need. When all the doors of earthly hope and wit and invention are shut—then cometh Jesus. It is that bit of experience which the Psalmist records in his picture of the sea-going men. They know a good deal about the handling of their craft—up to a certain point. But when the biggest storm of all arises, and they are 'at their wits' end, then . . .' then what? 'Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble'; and even if the waves had been no stiller, the hearts that looked out at them were. The thought of Him who holdeth the sea in the hollow of His hand brought them composure. 'Then are they glad because they are quiet.' 'At their wits' end, then . . .' then God!

[1] S. R. Lysaght, in *Poems of To-day*.

If doors did not have the habit of closing, we should feel no need of God. We need to be brought to the end of wits in order that we may come to the beginning of faith. Much of people's unbelief is due to the fact that they have never been compelled to think long enough and far enough to get to their own limits and find where the marches of God begin. It is when the ordinary means of access close that we feel our need of something that enters otherwise than by the portals of knowledge or custom.

Unbelief and sin and failure did not prevent His coming. We are not told that He swung those doors open: He came *through* them. Many of the doors leading out into a larger and a fuller life we have closed through our sin and carelessness and indifference and folly. The Lord Christ does not swing these misdeeds of ours miraculously out of our way. All their days some men will have to live behind doors which they have closed for themselves, doors of usefulness and hope and opportunity and good health. But though Christ does not remove these things He comes through them. Through the heaviest and most impenetrable obstacle He comes to us in our need.

Only Christ, who understandeth,
Cometh when the door is fast;
Only He, through moods and manners,
Loveth, loveth to the last.
May the lesson we are learning,
Ever learning, be the same—
'When the doors were shut,' by sorrow,
Sin, or failure—'*Jesus came.*'[1]

Faith Without Sight

John xx. 29.—'Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'

1. We have a common proverb that 'seeing is believing'; we are all inclined to suspend our judgment unless it is reinforced by the testimony of our eyes. In a materialistic age like the present we demand 'facts'; and by facts we mean those concrete realities which lie to hand, and can be subjected to the evidence of the senses. From the dawn of human life, indeed, mankind has felt the same impulse. In primitive ages and races it fashions idols to

[1] S. M. E.

represent its unseen deities. It imagines, not so much that man is made in the image of God, as that God is made in the image of man. Like a child it fears the abstract—it must have something tangible, something it can see and handle. 'Beware,' says George Bernard Shaw, 'of a man whose God is in the sky.' He voices the belief of many to-day, who feel that Christianity would be a much more credible thing if the Lord Jesus still tabernacled in human flesh upon earth, instead of reigning in glory in that heaven which seems so far away. There are many doubting Thomases to-day, saying: 'Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.' They forget Jesus' own reply: 'Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.' [1]

The truth is, seeing often actually hinders perception. There are people with excellent sight but poor perception. They cannot 'see through' the outward appearance of things to the realities which they embody, and so they miss the true significance of almost every object on which their eyes may rest. For such people the outward may conceal rather than reveal the inward and the real. We are all liable to lose the deeper meaning of the things with which we are very familiar and on which our eyes are continually resting. For instance, the people who live amongst the mountains or by the sea are not often the best able to see most in the sea and the mountains. They cannot see all in them that others can who only behold them once a year.

¶ 'There is a famous story,' writes Dr Boreham, 'told of the poet Lowell. In the days of his youth he spent one memorable summer vacation in the White Mountain district. One day when enjoying a stroll he became absorbed in conversation with a man who was in charge of a sawmill. The man chatted on, feeding his mill with logs as he talked. Presently the poet asked his new acquaintance if he could direct him to a point from which he could obtain a good view of the "Old Man of the Mountain." "Dunno," replied the man, unconcernedly, "never seed it!" Lowell expressed his astonishment that any one living so near such a marvellous spectacle, which people came from long distances to see, should never have taken the trouble to look at it. "And how far have you come?" asked the man. With evident pride the poet answered that he had come from Boston. "D'you tell?" exclaimed the countryman in surprise. "My! I'd like to see Boston! Why, just to stand on Bunker Hill! You go there often likely?" And James Russell Lowell confessed, with shame and confusion of face, that he never had!'

We have often marvelled at the unbelief of the crowds who saw with their own eyes the miracles of our Lord. How could men behold such prodigies and yet reject Him? Out of the thousands who gazed with open-eyed wonder at His mighty deeds only a handful believed on Him. Often-times, indeed, as has been pointed out, their prejudices made His miracles a positive offence—they were not worked against the national enemy; some of them were worked on the Sabbath, some of them involved the destruction of private property. Prejudice is always stronger than wonder in an unspiritual mind.

The enemies of the Christ had their own theories by which to account for such unusual happenings. 'Mere magic, worked by the power of Beelzebub.' It is always easier to believe in the power of Beelzebub than the power of God, if one is so inclined. An interesting illustration of how men can always find an alternative to the truth, when the truth is unpalatable, is found in the attitude of our Lord's enemies to the miracle of the man who was born blind. First of all they asserted, 'This is not the man who was blind,' and, when it was proved beyond question that he was the very same, they had another theory—'Then he was never blind.' And then, most extraordinary of all, when that idea was exploded, they said, 'Give God the glory; this man is a sinner. A wonderful thing has happened to you, but it is God's doing; the fact that Jesus happened to do certain things is a mere coincidence; it had nothing to do with the miracle. Give God the glory.' All of which shows that we accept any alternative to the truth when the truth itself is unwelcome. Have we not all of us known quite intelligent people who have preferred to accept the absurdity that this wonderful universe, with all its laws and harmonies, with all its miracles of life and love and mind, simply blundered into existence—the product of a blind, aimless chance—rather than acknowledge

[1] T. B. Stewart Thomson.

the obvious truth that it is the work of an intelligent Will?

¶ Kepler, the great astronomer, tells this story. 'Yesterday, when weary with writing, and my mind quite cloudy with considering these atoms, I was called to supper, and a salad which I had asked for was set before me. "It seems, then," said I aloud, "that if pewter dishes, leaves of lettuce, grains of salt, drops of vinegar and oil, and slices of eggs had been floating about in the air from all eternity, it might at last happen by chance that these become a salad." "May be," says my wife, "but not so nice and well-dressed as this of mine is!"' What Kepler said in jest some people say in earnest.

We think sometimes that those who saw Christ in the flesh, and who beheld His wonderful deeds, held an advantage over us who have never seen. Yet it is easier for us to believe in Him than it was for those whose eyes beheld Him. They could not see the Jesus whom we know. They could not see the Christ in Him. There were so many things that obscured the vision of their prejudiced minds—the fact that He came from Nazareth, His dress of a working man, His love of doubtful companions—all these, and many other things, blinded their eyes. They could not see past these things to the real Jesus. When God was manifest in the flesh, men did not believe. Having eyes they saw not, having ears they heard not, and having hearts they did not understand. Seeing is not believing.

2. The only way to get truth out of this saying is to twist it round—'believing is seeing.' It is faith which is 'the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen.' Spiritual verities can only be spiritually apprehended, and when they are so apprehended we need no material signs. Faith has its certainties, and they are as real and sure to the believer as the things that a man can see and hear and handle.

¶ The French naturalist, Jean Henri Fabre, was once asked by a visitor, 'Do you believe in God?' To which the great scientist replied emphatically: 'I can't say I believe in God; I see Him. Without Him I understand nothing; without Him all is darkness. You could take my skin from me more easily than my faith in God.'

There are those who are as sure of life beyond the grave as they are of the fact of life on this side of death. They are as certain of the spiritual and eternal environment as they are of the material and temporal. They do not need the signs of the spiritualist. They are completely independent of that kind of evidence. Believing is seeing.

No angel comes to us to tell
  Glad news of our belovèd dead;
Nor at the old familiar board,
  They sit among us, breaking bread.

Three days we wait before the tomb,
  Nay, lifelong years; and yet no more,
For all our passionate tears, we find
  The stone rolled backward from the door.

Yet are they risen as He is risen;
  For no eternal loss we grieve.
Blessèd are they who ask no sign,
  And, never having seen, believe![1]

There are multitudes of people who know Jesus Christ as a living Person, as very few were able to know Him in the days of His flesh. 'Jesus Christ, whom not having seen, ye love,' wrote Peter to his friends. He uses the word which implies, above any other, warmth and reality and intimacy. To this day there are those who love Jesus in that warm and personal fashion; in fact, the further that the passage of time has carried His visible presence from men, the greater has been the number of those who have believed on Him and loved Him. This personal experience of Jesus is the secret of the indestructibility of the faith.

¶ The following passage, quoted by Dr George Steven from a letter written some years ago now, illustrates this power of the soul to apprehend that which could never have come by the seeing of the eye or the hearing of the ear. It was from a lady who was faced with the ordeal of a very painful operation. She tells how, when the operation was over, the pain lasted for days at 'top pitch.' Then, to her horror, she was told that the operation and all the consequent pain must be undergone again. She wrote: 'I was terrified, not of the pain exactly, and not of death, but of giving way to cowardice. I felt the horror in all my limbs. I felt overpowered and utterly helpless, and although I was not too

[1] Sir Lewis Morris.

certain of the personal existence of God, I began to pray. . . . Suddenly I was conscious of the presence of God. I could almost see Him. I felt that I knew where He stood. He seemed to put His hand on me. I heard Him speak. He said, "I will be with you all the time, I will see you through." I cannot say my fear was gone, but I knew that I was comforted and I slept. Next morning when I awoke, my fear was gone. I felt no fear of fear, or of pain, or of death. I felt myself carried as a child in strong arms; I was not even unhappy.'

To the man who believes, the invisible Christ is made visible; the unseen world of the spirit becomes as sure as this world that he can see and touch; and the Kingdom of God is no strange land, but is round about him here, so that he can say with Francis Thompson—

> O world invisible, we view thee,
> O world intangible, we touch thee,
> O world unknowable, we know thee,
> Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed'; and believing, have seen the invisible, touched the intangible, known the unknowable.[1]

The Purpose of the Gospel

John xx. 30, 31.—'Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name' (R.V.).

In these words the Fourth Evangelist expresses the method and purpose of his Book. He tells us—and in this matter he is but speaking for the other Evangelists as well—that he had a perfectly clear and definite purpose before him, and that this purpose governed him both in the matters he included, and in those he omitted from his narrative. That general purpose may be summed up in three words. It was his desire, in the first place, to testify to the essential truth of the story as he told it; secondly, so to unfold the story that its spiritual contents should be made clear; thirdly, to bring its motive power to bear on the reader. The story, to put it in its briefest form, represents a Reality; it unfolds a Revelation; it offers a Redemption.

[1] J. Fisher Robson.

'That ye may believe . . .'. 'That ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God . . .'. 'That believing ye may have life in his name.'

1. *The Life as a Reality.*—The first thing aimed at in the Gospels is to convey the conviction that the story is true. Whatever may be our attitude on the questions of criticism, this is incontrovertible—that the Evangelists believed and claimed that they were putting before us the records of a life actually lived, and of words actually spoken by Him of whom they write. This is not a question of verbal infallibility, of inerrancy in minor details, but of substantial reality. They give us a picture of the Blessed Life, either in lightning flashes as in Mark, or in delicately chased outlines as in Luke; they give us the words of truth and grace that came forth from His lips, either with pregnant literalness as in Matthew, or with loving expansion as in John. But whether it be the story of the life or the summary of the teaching, the Evangelists claim that they were not only honest men, but that they knew what they were writing about; that the story they tell is part of the solid history of the world—indeed, its very crown and climax.

There are those who say that it matters not really whether the story be an actual fact or not, that its religious value consists, not in its historicity, but in its character as an embodiment of certain ethical ideas. They put the case thus: 'It does not greatly matter whether such a person as Jesus Christ really lived, and spoke, and died, and rose again as these narratives say He did. What is of significance is that such a story should have been conceived as possible, and been told in such a matchless and satisfying form. That it should become the property of the human race, and lift up men's minds out of the grovelling materialism of their lives—this is of infinite importance, and that this is so is shown by the wonderful effect which this history, as a story, has always had on men's lives from New Testament times to these. This,' they tell us, 'is what makes the imperishable value of the gospel for us.'

It is true that works of imagination often make a deep impression. We are familiar, for instance, with the great impetus given to the anti-slavery movement throughout the world by the romance called *Uncle Tom's Cabin*;

we know that the penalty of imprisonment for debt was largely removed from the Statute Book through the influence of Dickens's *Little Dorrit*; we know how certain grievous social abuses were cleared away by the impression left by the vivid and harrowing works of Charles Reade. But there is no comparison between the effect of romances, written with an ethical purpose, and the influence exerted by the Gospels. For in reading the Gospels we are brought into that relation to the Person of Jesus, and to His words and deeds, and to His death and resurrection, which forces us into an attitude of faith or unbelief, not merely towards the ideas embodied in the narrative, but to the narrative itself; indeed, not merely to the narrative as such, but to Him whose life-record and story it tells. If, therefore, as Harnack has told us, 'Christianity is Christ Himself,' it must vanish if once Christ is banished from the scene of history into the fairyland of myth. What has made historical Christianity is the conviction that the story of the Gospels is true, that Jesus was the Son of God, that He lived a human life, died and rose from the grave because He could not be holden by death, and, after appearing to His disciples and communing with them certain days, ascended into heaven, whence He sent His Spirit to be the Guide and Comforter of His people. This faith has been the formative principle of the Church in all ages. We may be sure that no less a power can keep Christianity alive than that which gave it birth; and this was unquestionably a passionate faith in the reality of the story of Jesus, whereof the Apostles were the witnesses.

¶ Whatever else may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left; a unique figure, not more unlike all His precursors than all His followers, even those who had the direct benefit of His teaching. It is of no use to say that Christ as exhibited in the Gospels is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been superadded by the tradition of His followers. The tradition of followers suffices to insert any number of marvels, and may have inserted all the miracles which He is reputed to have wrought. But who among His followers, or among their proselytes, was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imaging the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee: as certainly not St Paul, whose character and idiosyncrasies were of a totally different sort: still less the early Christian writers, in whom nothing is more evident than that the good which was in them was all derived, as they always professed that it was derived, from the higher source.[1]

2. *The Life as a Revelation.*—'That ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.' This is the second of the three purposes of the gospel story—to show forth the revelation of God's nature as the Father, and of His saving purpose through the Son. This is the special aim of the Fourth Gospel as distinguished from the others. The Synoptics are mainly concerned with the historic aspects of the life of Jesus. They were written when the details of that life were more or less fresh and vivid; when the very words, presence, even gestures of the Master as He spoke, were still remembered. The Fourth Gospel was written at a considerably later date, when the details of the Wonderful Life were growing somewhat dim, and were running a little into one another, as it were, like the blurred outlines of a receding mountain. We do not, therefore, go to the Fourth Gospel with the same expectation of finding verbal accuracy and pictorial vividness in the words and doings of Jesus. We find here general impressions rather than clearly defined details. It is often not easy to say where the words of Jesus end and those of the Evangelist begin. Is this Gospel less valuable for that reason? By no means; for in this book the Personality of the Master—His inner mind and purpose, the meaning of that Life which He had lived in the presence of His disciples, which had at first dazzled them by its brilliant detail, and which they could not as yet view in its symmetry and wholeness—is presented with convincing power, and we are made to feel that this was truly the Christ, the Son of the Living God, who revealed the Father, and brought Heaven within the horizon of faith.

¶ It is often asked, which is the true portrait of our Lord—St Mark's or St John's—for they are not much alike? Well, which is the true portrait of some dear relation or friend of ours, who died several years ago? Which is the true portrait, what we thought of him then, when he was with us, or what we remember of him now? We then had a mixed impression of him; we

[1] John Stuart Mill,

were generally attracted, sometimes repelled; we knew so many little things about him that we formed no clear picture of his character. Now that he is gone, our affection has idealized him. And what is idealization but the selection of the essential elements, and the suppression of the non-essential? [1]

The background here is not time, but eternity; the facts of history are seen in their relation to the uncreated mysteries which were before the foundation of the world, and which will remain when the world has been rolled up like a scroll. The Life here becomes the Light; the words are seen to find their deep significance from the Incarnate Word who spoke them; we behold His glory—'as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' The revealing power of the Life shines forth in all its inner lustre. It is a unique revelation. It is an authoritative revelation. As Harnack says: 'It is just this that stamped His peculiar genius—that He gave perfectly simple expression to profound and all-important truths, as though they could not be otherwise; as though He were uttering something that was quite self-evident; as though He were only reminding men of what they knew already, because it lives in the innermost part of their souls.'

3. *The Life as a Redemption.*—A redemption! This is the final secret of Jesus. He came that we might have life, and that we might have it abundantly. He came that our own poor lives, broken on the wheel of circumstance, ruined by the consequences of our evil deeds and habits, might be renewed through and through, and presented to the Father without spot or blemish. This has ever been the effect of the Christ-life on the world when it has opened its heart to its influence. For this was its central quality—that it has been the most communicable of all the lives that have ever been lived on earth.

And this is a marvellous thing! We admire greatness in men usually because it is something inimitable and unique. If it were common, it would not attract us; being something above and apart, it commands our homage—a homage in which there is a touch of despair. It must have been something of this feeling that made Peter cry out as he threw himself at his Master's feet: 'Depart from me, O Lord, because I am a sinful man!' But the Lord refused to leave His disciple for that very reason. It was what drew Him to men, and filled Him with passion for their souls—the desire to lift them up to His own level, to give them His own life of purity, peace and joy. Jesus has proved that one of the features of the highest goodness is that it is easier to follow than a lower form. Jesus is more imitable than Paul, or Augustine, or Luther, because His holiness is purer, His love profounder, His life more blameless in its unstained beauty than the life of the best of the sons of men.

We come at the central redemptive element of the life of Jesus, however, not in His life, but in His death. Calvary was the place where two seas met—man's sin and God's grace—and the shock of the conflict broke the heart of God's Son; but it was the turning-point of the storm. And in the still air of the Resurrection morning, when He came forth from the land of shadows (because 'He could not be holden of death'), He announced the victory of everlasting love over every power that can destroy the soul. The Cross must take its place as the centre of our faith.

We are bound by no theories of the Atonement. Let the Cross speak first, not to our intellect, but to our need; let the heart tell her tale before the brain begins to bring its logic to bear upon the mystery of its potent appeal. The first condition of coming to a theory of the Atonement that will meet the conditions of our own thought, is that we have a deep experience of its power and its emancipation. And that cannot be till we prostrate ourselves before the Love that was nailed to it. For it is Christ—the Eternal Son of God—dying on the Cross, which is the central fact of Christianity in all ages; and we may be sure that we shall not come to the secret of our forefathers' religion till that supreme fact has spoken to us as it did to them. 'Jesus Christ died on the tree,' said Carlyle to Emerson a century ago in Scotland, 'that built Dunscore Kirk yonder, that brought you and me together.' And it was that Cross that has built every church in Christendom.

But the life that was in the Christ who died on the Cross cannot become our life without our assent and co-operation, 'And that believing, ye might have life in his name.' Faith is needful to open this secret door of blessing. And what is faith but this—friendship raised to

[1] W. R. Inge.

its highest terms, 'with all its loyalties, its trust, its passionate surrender of itself to the object of its regard'?

His redemption can only become ours through the doorway of a love and obedience that opens wide enough to receive all He has to give us on the one hand, and all we can surrender to Him on the other.

The Ministry of Work

John xxi. 3.—'Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.'

When the Passover was ended the little group of disciples made their way to Galilee under promise of tryst with their risen Lord, and Peter was one of them. He might not have been there at all if it had not been for the amazing thing which had been told him that, in the promise of meeting, there had been express mention of his name. 'Tell my disciples and Peter' had been the terms of it, and a broken, disconsolate man had travelled in the strength of this all the journey to Galilee. When they reached the Lake and its familiar scenes, everything was as it had been in the past. Unruffled by the tempest in the south, unshadowed by the darkness of the Cross, the simple life was flowing on as usual. But we may be sure that it all brought to Peter a rush of almost unbearable memories. His mind would go back and back again, as it does at such times, to the wonderful hopes he had had, the wonderful things he had seen and experienced, and, above all, to all that it had meant to him to be a disciple of Jesus—and crash, down on the top of those thoughts every time would come the realization of what the end of it all had actually been, and what part he, Peter, had had in that being the end; and, bitterest of all, how he had behaved to his Master, how he had repaid by betrayal all that Jesus had been to him. How those words repeated themselves, 'I know not the man,' and the words he had heard his Master say, 'Whosoever denieth me before men, him will I also deny before my Father in heaven.' Against the strongest light and the highest privilege he had sinned. He was with his Master at the most sacred times, and if ever heaven could strengthen earth, he should have been a strong man. Then he would remember that Master's loving kindness in his own family, and that work of healing would rise up to condemn him. And he must have said to himself, If only he could go back and be called again; if he could start again, he would see this time that the end would be different. Perhaps when the Master came!

There would be no thought of instant labour with the disciples, for any moment Jesus might appear. But the days went on and He did not come. The time of waiting was trying them severely. Even so has one seen men in the trenches, waiting for 'zero hour' to go over the top, fidget endlessly with their equipment, laugh almost hysterically at pointless jokes, or snap out at one another in sudden irritation.

It was therefore a relief, the relief of action, when Peter said suddenly: 'I go a fishing.' All unwittingly he had touched a chord in all their hearts. They, too, wanted something to occupy their minds in their waiting time, some work to turn their restless hands to. It was the obvious solution of the difficulty; 'We also go with thee!' said the rest. Out there in the middle of the great lake, immersed in their operations, their nerves could relax and their minds would have no opportunity for aimless brooding or anxious expectation.

They stood together by the sea
In trouble and perplexity;
The waves were breaking on the sand,
The winds were moaning o'er the land,
And life came back, like floating wrack,
On those dim shores of Galilee.

On every hill, 'neath every tree
Was some fond haunt of memory,
Where they had known the mystic force
Of healing might, or high discourse;
And at His will those waves were still
Upon the sea of Galilee.

But Peter nought can hear or see
Save that dark cross on Calvary,
The crowing cock, the certain maid;
'I go a fishing,' then he said;
He could not bear the thoughts that were
Thick-crowding now in Galilee.[1]

1. It was a true instinct that sent these seven men back to work. And so we must learn from

[1] W. C. Smith.

the story the blessedness of work. It is a healing anodyne, the only avenue of release for strong souls in tension. In the hour of sorrow, of disappointment, of temptation, it is fatal to sit unoccupied; we must work out our own salvation. We often think of work as anything but a blessing; rather, as something to escape from at the earliest opportunity. We regard it as Adam's curse—'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread'—whereas in days of anxiety, for example, it is a kindly physician. The old fisherman in Scott's *Antiquary* shared this misconception. 'It's weel wi' you gentles,' he says, 'that can sit in the house wi' handkerchers at yer een when ye lose a friend; but the like o' us maun to our wark again, if our hearts were beating as hard as my hammer.' Yes, but the man at his honest work was better off in his time of sorrow than had he been able to nurse his grief. Work is a healing ministry from God in heaven. When the heart is crushed beneath its heavy load, unable to lift itself up, with what gracious tact, as it were, our work soothes and braces the wounded spirit, giving it new interests, fresh hopes, and a widened outlook.

¶ How was Dante comforted when Beatrice died? He lost himself in his work. How were Charles and Mary Lamb comforted during those awful days in which life's blackest cloud hung gloomily over them? Those who have read their books know. And who can forget that scene under the great baobab tree in the heart of Africa when David Livingstone laid the body of his wife to rest? His journal becomes a broken-hearted moan, a pitiful sob. For the first time in his life, he says that he would be content to die. But see! 'For such comfort as could be obtained in these dark days he turned again to his work.' So says his biographer. And see what he himself says: 'The sweat of one's brow,' he writes, 'is no longer a curse; it proves a tonic.'[1]

Work bears an essential part in the development of Christian character. It has sometimes seemed to eager enthusiasts as if this world of active duty were hostile to the higher interests of the soul. In this spirit men have actually withdrawn themselves from the world. But Christian character cannot be developed in this rarefied atmosphere. It is inseparable from life. And a true life must be lived in the light of day, and in the full stream of duty. It is our daily work, however commonplace it may seem, that brings our Christian character to maturity and strength. Faith is the root of life, and prayer and meditation the gentle sap and showers; but work is the activity that unfolds the germs, and makes the tree blossom with flower and fruit. Had we no such means of calling out our energies, we would be sadly lacking in courage and strength. In the midst of the most thronging duties and responsibilities of life, let us thank God for our work.

¶ Everything we do, if we learn to do it simply for God, is, here and now, the one means of growing in love for Him. To-day it is cooking and scrubbing; to-morrow it may be utterly different. Let us practise a genial concentration upon just the one thing picked out for us by God. More than half our life goes in wishing for things other than those sent us. Yet it is these things, as sent, and when willed and at last loved as sent, that train us for Home, that can form a spiritual Home for us even here and now.[1]

2. The second truth we learn is that Jesus waits to meet us at our work. These seven disciples in their fishing-boat must have been glad that their Lord encountered them there, instead of sitting in dumb apathy with listless hands upon the shores of Galilee. 'I being in the way, the Lord led me'—that rings true to the Christian experience. We are fellow labourers with God, but He expects us to take the initiative, and to begin the work which He will crown with full perfection of achievement. We are all too apt to think of our Lord as only present on the mountain tops; but He is Lord of the valleys too. We can serve Him in the humblest occupations, by performing whatsoever our hand findeth to do, with all our might.

It is Christ alone who can crown our labours with success. As we read on a little further in this twenty-first chapter of John, we find that the fishing expedition did not at first prosper. 'That night they caught nothing.' Time after time their nets were shot, and time after time their nets were empty. Fruitlessly they toiled, until at last the moon waned, and the stars grew dim, and with the chill dawn wind came the first cold light of opening day. By this time they had drifted inshore; and there,

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Nest of Spears*, 229.

[1] F. von Hügel, *Selected Letters*, 306.

glimmering faintly in the gloom, they saw the white robes of a mysterious Stranger standing on the beach, and heard a voice, 'Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore: and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.' Night, and nothing. Morning, and Jesus.

A Soul's Restoration

John xxi. 15-17.—'So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.'

1. After the Resurrection a new epoch opens out before the men who had followed Christ, a period of hardship but of glorious opportunity, and with his whole heart Peter wishes he had been more worthy to take his place in the work of the coming days. He is willing to serve as never before, to sacrifice, to suffer if need be, but perhaps the Master does not want to be further associated with a man who has proved so unworthy. The message brought to him by the women helps to silence these doubts. 'Go, tell the disciples, and Peter, I go before you into Galilee.' And so he takes his place with the others in these momentous hours in the Upper Room and elsewhere when the Master appears in His risen glory. He is to learn that the man who proves himself a failure in the religious life can start afresh as soon as he turns his face to the Saviour who first called him into His service. God never gives up hope of the man who retains a love for Christ; though he prove unworthy and fail miserably, there is always a Divine love which will take him and set him on his feet again, and call him once more to loyal service. So Peter found, and so the erring followers of the Master have found all through the ages. They may not start as though they had never denied their Lord; they may find that as a result of their sin they have been excluded from opportunities of service which were once theirs, but with the Lord is infinite forgiveness, and Peter found how great that forgiveness was.

After their hour of weakness, the disciples determined to live for the message of the Resurrection which brought them new joy, but they were leaderless-men. The Master whom they always followed had gone, and no one stood out conspicuously among the others as a natural leader. There was a time when all eyes would have turned to Peter. Did the disciples not remember the hour of the Great Confession when the Master, discovering one disciple who had learned the great secret, said, 'Thou art Peter; on this rock I shall build my Church.' The words did not by any means involve the others in subordination to the reckless Apostle, but they seemed to mark him out for priority among the disciples. Whether the others would have been willing to forget Peter's past, and to give him a place as leader we cannot tell, but Peter would not have accepted it until some experience came which made him sure that it was the Lord's will that he should assume the position he seemed to have forfeited. Many days passed, and Peter continued to take his place with the others, until one momentous day came when he discovered that it was his Master's good pleasure, not only that he should have his place in the disciple band, but that he should contribute his gifts of initiative and leadership and assume the place which he thought he had forfeited.

2. We know the story of the fruitless night on the Lake, of the miraculous draught, of Peter's hurried rush through the waters to meet his Lord, and yet something held him. It was not for him to be before his brethren. So when they were come to the shore, while the others went with Jesus, Peter stayed, busy with the boats, the nets, and his own long thoughts. Then they called him to eat with them—silent and sad, feeling how little fitness was his to be there. When the meal was over Christ spoke to Peter. 'Simon,' said the voice he knew, and had thought that now he would always fear. Not 'Cephas,' as once Jesus had called him near this very place; not the Rock; not the steadfast. It was the old name which the fisherfolk used, and it came kindly from the lips of the Master. Jesus had stern words to speak, but never to the baffled and sorrowful spirit.

The thrice-repeated question of the Master is

not too easy to understand, but it is the searching questioning of one who wishes to take a follower whose sin has made him distrustful of himself, and to make of that hesitant disciple a strong leader among his fellows. There are two Greek words used, which are translated in our version by the word 'love.' The one—the higher one—is used by the Master in His first two questions; the other, which means 'to care for' a person, is used by Peter in all his answers and by Jesus in His last question. Peter had always asserted his love, had said that though others might deny Him he would not, and Jesus asks him if he still feels as sure of his great love. 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than the others do?' His love had not grown less, but he will no longer make assertions which he cannot substantiate, and so he answers, 'Yea, Lord, Thou knowest I care for Thee.' There is a little delay, and a more searching question is asked, one which makes no comparison with others, but which seeks to bring Peter to an examination of his own heart. 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?' The same answer is given. 'Yea, Lord, Thou knowest I care for Thee.' Jesus probes further, and using Peter's own word (natural affection), asks a question which causes the disciple grief, but is meant in love. 'Simon, son of Jonas, do you really care for Me?' To which Peter answers, 'Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest I care for Thee.' Meantime, with words full of meaning, Jesus has been placing upon him the responsibility of leadership. 'Feed my sheep.' It seems to be not merely a call to discipleship, but a call to use to the full his powers as one of the disciple band, to accept that position which by his denial he had forfeited.

So out of a man ashamed of himself and of his weakness, Christ built a leader, and out of broken disappointed men He is doing the same daily. There is only one condition—that of intense self-sacrificing love to Christ.

What is the beginning? Love. What the course? Love still.
What the goal? The goal is Love on the happy hill.
Is there nothing then but Love, search we sky or earth?
There is nothing out of Love hath perpetual worth:
All things flag but only Love, all things fail or flee;
There is nothing left but Love worthy you and me.[1]

3. Do we wonder at times to what extent this language of passionate love to Jesus corresponds to a living emotion on the part of those who use it? Indeed they may occasionally be a little sceptical about themselves when they become critical of their own religious speech, and allow themselves leisure for self-scrutiny. To put the point quite plainly, if someone addressed them pointedly and personally, as used to be the habit in the evangelistic inquiry-room, and asked them, 'Do you love Jesus?' they might honestly hesitate as to their reply. They might at the same time in the secret of their own hearts envy Peter because he, at least, was so sure. He had been sure at an earlier stage, but had failed. He was sure again, but sure with a difference. In the dark of his self-imposed exile he had seen his own sin, but he had also seen the patience and the pity of his Lord; and now, though he was not at all sure of his strength, he knew beyond all doubt that he loved with a love that could never end. Browning speaks in *Sordello* of a love that is

whole
And true; if sure of nought beside, most sure
Of its own truth at least.

That was Peter's love to his Lord, and later disciples may rightly envy him a heart not only so fixed, but also so conscious of its own wholeheartedness. The mood of misgiving is increased in some by the unduly sensuous speech which the Church has often employed in her devotions. Hymnology is apt to be cloyed and clogged with language drawn from the feelings of earthly lovers. In discussing what it may mean for a modern to love Christ, it may be well to avoid language which, even if spiritually interpreted, has a fleshly sound: it may be wise to elucidate the reasonable and spiritual elements, which are therefore the universal and permanent elements, in the response of the redeemed to the great love of their Saviour.

¶ When I was quite a small boy, certainly under thirteen and possibly younger, I was

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

taken to a mission, and I heard the line of the well-known mission hymn that runs—

And Jesus shall show you His beautiful face.

I was completely repelled. I knew that the line corresponded to nothing in my own experience, and with the youthful arrogance which is, I think, common to children, I did not believe that it corresponded with anything any one else felt or could feel. I was, so to speak, 'put off' that particular type of religious emotion for a long time. And even much later in my young days, such hymns as, 'How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds,' 'Jesu, the very thought of Thee,' 'Jesu, lover of my Soul,' and others of that kind, gave me more pain than pleasure. I believe I am right when I say the discomfort that these and similar hymns produced in me was due to the half-unconscious thought, 'If this emotion is not genuine and real in those who express it all religion is hypocrisy; and if it is genuine and real, then religious people possess something to which I am an utter stranger; something to which I see no means of attaining.'[1]

(1) It might be worth while to substitute for the word *love* the word *loyalty*. In this we may feel on specially safe ground, because this was the line the Master took when He was defining the love which He desired from His disciples: it was His own supreme test for that love. On the night in which He was betrayed He spoke much about love, but He also spoke much about loyalty and obedience. 'If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.' There is deep instruction here. In the Church's handling of this whole theme there is a certain danger of mere emotionalism. If ever there was a danger of that, it was surely on that night of separation and farewell: was ever atmosphere more tensely charged with emotion than the air of that Upper Room? Yet He declined to allow the legitimate emotions of love and sorrow to degrade themselves into mere sentiment: He caught hold of the moral nerve of the whole matter, and there He laid His emphasis—'If a man love me he will keep my words,' To love what He loved, seek what He sought, that is to love Him. If men have it in their hearts to keep Christ's words and walk in His steps—well, it is a high calling and a hard one, but souls grow great by following it; and whether they are conscious of strong emotion or not, they are among the true lovers of Jesus, imperfect but sincere.

(2) Or we might substitute the word *gratitude*. We miss one of the characteristic notes of the Christian life if we forget that it is a response—a response to His call, to His love, to His sacrifice, to Himself. And when believing souls have counted up all their reasons to be grateful to Him, and mused upon them in their hearts till the fire of meditation kindles into doxology, they are not far away from that high spiritual love which the saints have not been ashamed to confess. The sense of sins forgiven, of bonds untied, of grace received, pours itself into this.

'Love covereth a multitude of sins.' It was the restored Peter who said this long afterwards in his Epistle. We quote it lightly until we come to experience how much love has to cover in ourselves, and how wondrously it accomplishes it. Peter learned this in the day when, full of remembrance of the denying and forsaking, but sure that he loved his Lord, he lifted his eyes to the face of Jesus, and dared, in the teeth of all seeming, to make the great protestation. And when he saw what was in the face of Christ, and heard what was in the voice of Christ, he knew that love covered all. It is as willing to forget as it is to forgive. It does not keep hinting at past failures and old revolts. It hides them as in a grave. Love is too busy unveiling the promises and allurements of to-morrow to have time, and still less to have desire, to stir up the dust in the barren fields of yesterday. 'Love covereth all things,' said Peter, and of all men who ever lived in this world, he was a man who knew.

Whether it is named gratitude or loyalty or love or anything else, it is our response, and in the thrill of it through the deep places of our being we are made one with the Church militant.

¶ The story is told of a young college student who was persuaded by his mother to visit an art gallery, where a fine painting, 'The Man of Galilee,' was being exhibited. After studying the masterpiece from every angle, the young man turned to go. One of the attendants, who had watched his interest and earnestness, said to him, 'It is a great picture.' 'Yes, it is a great picture.' Then he went back, and looked

[1] Peter Green, *Our Lord and Saviour*, 8.

again upon the face on the canvas, and with softened voice uttered these words: 'O Man of Galilee, if there is anything I can do to help You in the work You are doing in the world, count on me.'

Youth and Age

John xxi. 18.—'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.'

HERE we have a picture of Peter young and of Peter old, like one of those days, so familiar to our climate, which is radiant with sunshine from dawn to noon, then steeped in fogs till night descend. But is that other than the picture of all youth and age? Perhaps in this very typical nature of his life and experience we find the secret of Peter's perennial interest. He is just our more virile selves, in whom we see intensely and decisively what we ourselves are only feebly and vaguely. When he was young, he was really young, being buoyant, enterprising, free; and, when he was old, he was really old, being limited, constrained, distressed.

1. 'When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself.' In our modern figure Peter was ever ready to take his coat off for any task in hand, and needed none to help him off with it. Most mistakes he could make, but not the supreme mistake of allowing life's opportunities to slip past not used at all.

It may not be youth's privilege to be always wise, but it ought to be youth's equipment to be always enterprising. To lack this is, at any age, to be already decrepit; and to set out in life with the idea of dodging the primal curse, that anything worth doing is to be done only in the sweat of one's brow, is merely to be born old. Nor is it enough to be ready to face tasks when they are imposed on us. To be really young we must turn the curse into a joy, girding ourselves and going out to seek adventure, and not hanging up decision till others have made up their minds and decided for us. By this measure Peter was pre-eminently young. Before others had grasped the situation, he had already started to act on it. A fine independence, with rapid decision and promptness of word and action, proved him in those days daringly, originally, energetically young.

In days of multitudinous societies and fellowships and movements, and generally of acting in crowds, even the young are in danger of losing this mark of youth. Fellowship is a very fine thing, and youth is essentially clubbable. But the true difference between a crowd and a fellowship is that, in the former, we help to sweep each other off our feet, and that, in the latter, it is our supreme task to help one another to find our own feet. We can misuse the best helps, and we misuse the best of all human helps—the sympathy of our brethren—when we rely wholly on the enthusiasm around us to gird us for enterprise and high resolve. The result too often is that to sit close together and keep ourselves warm is regarded as the end of religion; whereas youth's true way of being warm is to breast the hill and battle with the storm in its own energy and purpose.

Again, Peter took off his own coat to his own enterprise. 'Thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest.' Things no one else thought of doing Peter did. Into the first confession of Jesus as the Christ he walked, the first offer to die with Him, the first facing of a hostile world that had crucified his Master. Often they were mistaken ways. But what mistakes! 'This be far from thee, Lord.' 'Let us build here three tabernacles.' 'Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.' Let us remember, even about his denial, that all the others made the same profession, and he alone went far enough to be tempted and to fall. There above all else is the mark of youth, to stake everything with a high heart upon our own enterprise.

> He either fears his fate too much
> Or his deserts are small,
> That dares not put it to the touch,
> To win or lose it all.

To be young is to feel that the world is before us, with all the multitudinous paths which run to every point of the horizon to choose from, and the one we choose truly ours, courageously to be entered and steadfastly to be followed. But how few are ever young after that fashion! Most make some timid efforts and then find themselves in the beaten path. At most they seek a newly-beaten path, a recent fashion of thought. But, however it afford a pleasant sense of independence and originality, a new

heterodoxy is no more one's own path than an ancient orthodoxy. So long as we merely follow and do not choose of our own insight and go on of our own resolution, whether it turn out to be the ancient beaten road or the recent track, we can arrive at no worthy goal. The people God has called to high service have ever had a stout heart for their own untrodden, solitary way.

¶ If you teach a man to keep his eyes upon what others think of him, unthinkingly to lead the life and hold the principles of the majority of his contemporaries, you must discredit in his eyes the authoritative voice of his own soul. He may be a docile citizen; he will never be a man. It is ours, on the other hand, to disregard this babble and chattering of other men better and worse than we are, and to walk straight before us by what light we have. They may be right; but so, before heaven, are we. They may know; but we know also, and by that knowledge we must stand or fall.[1]

There is an Italian proverb which says, 'Not to know at twenty is never to know, not to do at thirty is never to do, and not to have at forty is never to have.' Learning, of course, does not stop at twenty or doing at thirty or acquiring at forty, but, if we miss the insight of twenty or the energy of thirty or have nothing accomplished behind us at forty, the promise even of the longest life is small. Without these fruitful beginnings, the process of growing old is a mere tale of darkening insight, of languishing enterprise, and of increasing poverty of spirit. We never grow old to any profit unless we have been first really young.

2. 'But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.' All the spontaneity, all the ardour, all the enterprise gone! The inevitable alone left, and such poor submission to it as we cannot avoid! This truly is being and feeling old.

Surely the golden hours are turning grey
And dance no more, and vainly strive to run:
I see their white locks streaming in the wind—
Each face is haggard as it looks at me,
Slow turning in the constant clasping round,
Storm-driven.

[1] R. L. Stevenson.

Is life, which was so buoyant with the call to follow our own bent and high resolve, to be reduced to this mill-track round which nearly all our seniors seem to tread? All kinds of hands gird them. Even little infants have giant hands for the purpose. Vast numbers go on day by day accepting all kinds of dull drudgeries, driven by needs not their own. Is it strange that a fierce rebellion against this inevitable subjection occasionally glows through our veins?

Yet the question of how we shall submit is even greater than the question of how we shall choose. Inevitable in some way submission will be, but whether it be the mere surrender of weakness or the consecration of peace depends on how we grow old. All alike we must grow old if we live, but we are very far from being alike in our way of growing old. One way is to shrivel up and become too small for life. But there is also the other way of finding life become too large for us.

Let us look at Peter as he grows old. We see him faced by a new age which he never was able to understand, and in which he never could choose his own way and walk in it. Only on the compulsion of a vision could he bring himself to enter the house of a Gentile; only when he saw that Cornelius had received the same gift as himself could he cease withstanding God; only when openly rebuked by Paul did he see the inconsistency of calling the Gentiles brethren in word and denying it in deed. Never did he rise to Paul's vision, or follow even what he saw with Paul's freedom.

Part of the failure was due just to old age. Had he been a younger man, he, too, might have seen the vision of a universal Christianity, and have set aside boldly all that stood in its way. Yet we must remember that to Peter was given the mission to the Jews even as to Paul the mission to the Gentiles; and his perplexities arose from this task, seeing how every step he took to a more comprehensive fellowship meant the alienation of those he sought to win. Nor perhaps was his task less necessary than Paul's, for how would the gospel have fared had he not preserved the loyalty of those who, like himself, could only see a step at a time, and even take it only by the manifest compulsion of God? That compulsion, moreover, he never opposed. However much the issue was forced upon him, in the end he stretched forth his

hands, and allowed himself to be carried even whither he would not.

But this supreme surrender was not attained merely by the limitations of age. It was due to three experiences which had so expanded the meaning of life that he knew he could not find his way at all except by the compulsion of God's will.

First, he had learned his own weakness. He had thought that no power on earth could make him deny his Master, and he had succumbed to the scoff of a servant-maid. None of us know ourselves till we have made this discovery; and, once it is made, no one walks the ways of life again with the same easy confidence.

Second, he had learned the meaning of the Cross. The last word the Master Himself could say was, 'Not my will but thine be done': and Peter had seen this submission turned into God's own victory. Who that has ever shared this triumph can be sure again that his own way is best?

Third, he had seen a larger vision of the Kingdom of God. Dim it may have been and its horizons beyond his sight, but how great and spiritual it was compared with the restoration of the kingdom to Israel for which he once hoped! So measureless indeed had it become that God alone could show him the way to serve it.

We, too, have entered on a new age. Those of us who are young may obtain a clear vision of its purpose, and see our own way in the midst of it and gird our own loins and walk in it. And if so, we must serve like Paul, not turning from high demands, or hesitating to form large plans, or in any way being disobedient to the heavenly vision. But for many of us it will be too late for this way of fresh understanding and new resolve, and all the more if life has brought us already large responsibilities and urgent service. Like Peter, we shall often doubt the result and feel constantly the sense of loss. But it is God, and not man, who sees the end from the beginning. Wherefore, the last question about us is not how do we determine, but how do we submit. When we live in sincerity and are compelled to recognize that the belief we fear is true, or the course of action we think hazardous is right, the Master Himself girds us. Do we stretch forth our hands, and allow ourselves to be carried even though it continue to be whither we would not? As the last resort the wisest of us will come to this. The vision fades, and we must accept the compulsion of conviction and duty and submit hour by hour to the demands of God's will. At the end of the day there is no other way in which God can to the last be glorified.

¶ My man, dare to look up to God and say: Deal with me henceforth as thou wilt. I am of thy mind. I am thine. I refuse nothing that pleases thee. Lead me where thou wilt.[1]

3. In a special sense this saying is applied to Peter's actual death. But only a death of surrender which crowns a life of surrender can glorify God. Death must be the seal of our lives, even as Christ's fulfilling of all righteousness on the Cross was the seal and perfection of His life, ere it counts in God's service, right dying perfecting right living.

Regarding Peter's death there is a tradition, which, if not actual history, is at least good commentary on the text. Peter, we are told, was present in Rome when the first great persecution arose. He was persuaded to flee, it is said, for the apostolic reason of further service. But Peter was a very human person in respect of his own fears, and still more in respect of the sorrows of others. And even age could not wholly alter his old impulsive ways. But as he went out of the gate he met the Master going in. 'Whither goest Thou?' Peter asked. 'I go again to be crucified,' was the reply. Peter accepted the rebuke and returned to obey the charge, 'Feed my flock,' at the cost of the Cross; even as his Master. Then the old question 'Lovest thou me?' was answered, as it had never been even in all his free and active and buoyant youth. True he was girded by others, and he had no choice but to submit to what was for him also a cup of agony, but he stretched forth his hands, and, in that act, his whole soul was given in final and complete surrender, in utter trust and love.

For us, too, the inevitable day will come. We are not called to choose death or love it, or even to be free from the shadow of its loneliness and uncertainty and terror. Yet at that moment our whole life's submission may be crowned. If we then surrender all earthly things at last willingly into the hands of God, we shall glorify God in death as never in life.

[1] Epictetus.

What all our life could only imperfectly strive after, will thus be utterly completed. May that not be the supreme meaning of death? And, if so, will it not, because it is the perfect glorifying of God, be the suitable way into His Eternal Glory?

Straightway I was 'ware
So weeping, how a mystic shape did move
Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;
And a voice said in mastery while I strove,—
'Guess now who holds thee!' 'Death,' I said.
But there
The silver answer rang,—'Not death but Love.'

The Insistent Call of Christ

John xxi. 19.—'And when he had spoken thus, he saith unto him, Follow me.'

This word which stands at the close of the Gospel was spoken to Simon Peter, and in this respect the Gospel closes as it began, for the call to Peter to follow is to be found there as well. The repetition is surely of some significance. It is more than a mere repetition. The intervening circumstances lend it a new colour. When we begin to think about it we see new meanings in the call. Perhaps the most obvious thought is that this call dominated Peter's life, persisted through every phase and stage of it, could not be avoided or escaped. 'Follow me' met him at the beginning of the story; it is still sounding in his ears at the end. Between the two are all the strange twists and turns, the alternating progress and reversion, the blended lights and shadows which go to make up human life, all of them accentuated in the case of Peter by his impulsive nature. His world was a world of colour and of movement; a world of amazing insights and stupendous blindness; of great things burning in the mind like fire, and cowardice freezing the lips into silence. At one moment he comes to the fore as a man into whose ears God has whispered a tremendous secret, at the next he is thrust back as by the voice of the devil. He is always first whether in right or wrong. He answers first at Cæsarea Philippi, he talks first on the Mount of Transfiguration, he springs out of the boat first when he sees that Jesus is on the shore, he denies first when the naked realities of the Judgment Hall force themselves upon his soul. It is a man of this stamp whose relationship with Christ fills so much of the gospel story. It is doubtful whether any one but Jesus would have tolerated him through the whole of it. If nothing else had closed the story the denial would have done so in the case of any other leader. It was blank disloyalty and cowardice. Would any one but Jesus have forgiven such an act? The question as to whether there is a gospel of Divine forgiveness for the moral failures of the world is settled once and for all by Peter.

It is, then, in the light of this turbulent story that we must read the repeated call to follow. Peter may deny his Lord, but he cannot silence His call. There was no escape from it. It is the key to Peter's life, and the only key. All the varying moods and feelings of this impulsive soul are, as it were, bound together by the unvarying summons of Christ.

Now, we are all in a strange fashion kinsmen of Simon Peter. The red blood of our common humanity flowed in the veins of this passionate soul who oscillated between the careers of a traitor and a martyr, and managed to achieve both. And if that be true, this other truth deserves to be set side by side with it: the dealings of Jesus with Simon Peter speak of the Divine purpose which broods over the world and shapes the lives of men. Using the insight gained from the personal story, there are two points which we may single out for emphasis: the first concerned with the Divine aspect of the relationship, and the second with the human.

1. The first truth is that all God's dealings with men must be read in the light of the relationship which Jesus established with Peter. The repeated insistence of the words 'Follow me' takes us to the heart of the whole story. It is the story of the race. It is a story of denials and returns, strange light and perplexing darkness, of triumph and failure, of passionate impulses behind reckless heroisms and equally reckless desertions. The glory and the shame of it are near akin; the achievements are never safe, the failures never final. The spirit of turbulence is at the heart of it all. History has often been described as a flowing stream, but if we are to have a true picture we must see it not as a sheet of placid water flowing on even current between untroubled banks, but as rushing and winding

and plunging, a conflict of varying currents, but still a stream because all the movements are connected. What is the bond of connection in history? What force and urge is behind it? We may answer, the spirit of man in its restless seeking; but there is a deeper interpretation than that. The spirit of man is the answer to a call, and it is the call which gives meaning to the whole story of life. Sometimes we ask ourselves what is the meaning of this rushing stream of life, this endless series of strifes and wars and tumults, these sudden aspirations and hopes, these restless new movements? Some observers are bewildered by the movement which never ceases, and they murmur to themselves, 'Vanity, vanity, all is vanity.' But if there is much which forbids us the refuge of an easy creed, there is also too much that is great and splendid for us to reconcile ourselves to the finding of despair. Somehow one finds that at the end of every great failure in the human story there is a promise of better things. We are sometimes oppressed by the feeling that there is no security in any stage of progress, that some breath of passion may sweep away the gains of years. Let us at least set side by side with that the fact that there is no finality of judgment and condemnation. The world is not bound to its evil; men are never doomed. Over the whole story there broods a God of untiring patience and compassion, who, when things are at their blackest, sends His flaming summons out over the world of men, 'Follow me.'

That same Divine Spirit touches us in our personal lives. We find the same story in individual experience as we do in the history of the world. Denials and hardships, the mingling of diverse elements, all enter into our experience of life. Sometimes we forfeit life's gains by inward failure, sometimes our hopes are dashed to the ground by the tyranny of outward circumstance; but all through the story of life there is something still to seek, some light which lures us on, the call to follow is never silent. It is the key to individual experience as well as to the history of mankind.

¶ In 1878 Stevenson wrote to his father from Paris: 'Still I believe in myself and my fellowmen and the God who made us all. . . . I am lonely and sick and out of heart. Well, I still hope; I still believe; I still see the good in the inch, and cling to it. It is not much, perhaps, but it is always something. . . . There is a fine text in the Bible, I don't know where, to the effect that all things work together for good to those who love the Lord. . . . Strange as it may seem to you, everything has been, in one way or the other, bringing me a little nearer to what I think you would like me to be. 'Tis a strange world, indeed, but there is a manifest God for those who care to look for him.'[1]

And more than once in days
Of doubt and cloud and storm, when drowning hope
Sank all but out of sight, I heard his voice,
'Be not cast down. I lead thee by the hand,
Fear not.' And I shall hear his voice again—
I know that he has led me all my life.[2]

2. Now as to the human aspect of this great relationship. What we call faith in its fundamental meaning is the answer to this call. Here, again, Peter illustrates what in varying degree is true of all of us. What did faith mean to him? Was it the love which bound him to Jesus or even the great confession which came from his lips? These entered into his faith, but ultimately faith for Peter was a readiness after every failure to get up and to go on in answer to that call. And that is true for all men; faith is a trust in the higher voice which even when it has been denied still summons us to follow. It does not find the same expression with all men. Some recognize the call as coming from Christ Himself, they discern His personal leading in life, and the journey of life to them is as directly under His guidance as it was to His first disciples. Others have no such sense, but on account of that we are not going to class them as without religion and devoid of faith. God's work in humanity is wider and deeper than that. His Spirit does not wait to bless until its working is acknowledged. And the supreme truth for all faith is that life is overruled by that Divine patience and compassion which Christ showed to Peter. Because He is Lord there are no final failures; there is no doom resting on any soul. Whatever a man or woman may have done that Divine forgiveness and patience are not exhausted. Denied a thousand times, the call to follow will never cease. That is what the love of God as we

[1] J. Kelman, *The Faith of R. L. Stevenson*, 16.
[2] Tennyson.

find it in Christ is like. No failure in life counts ultimately if we refuse to accept its verdict. No moral weakness is final if we have the courage to get up and go on. The only death we need fear is the snapping of that thread which binds us to the vision of the good. Such faith is the light and life of men. History and experience both show its place in the story, and the crowning reality of the world is the love of God, from which there is, and can be, no separation, because He will never resign us to our failure, and never cease to call us to follow.

¶ We are told that the family crest of the great metaphysical poet, Johne Donne, a crest which he himself sported in his earlier days, was a sheaf of snakes. And this symbolized well the brood of temptations that twisted and turned in his bosom in his youth, and which in some of his poetry he so graphically, and almost revoltingly describes. But to him there came a great change. The mercy and the might of Jesus Christ delivered him from a guilty past and a sin-ridden nature. Then he replaced his old crest with a new one. He cancelled the sheaf of snakes, and in its stead he put Christ crucified, Christ crucified against the background of an anchor.[1]

Though deep in mire, wring not your hands and weep,
  God lends His arm to all who say 'I can.'
No shamefaced outcast ever sank so deep
  But he may rise and be again a man.

The Main Business

John xxi. 21, 22.—'Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.'

Simon Peter's question concerning the future reserved for his friend—'Lord, and what shall this man do?'—seems to have been prompted partly by affection, but partly also by curiosity. Jesus had just formally restored Peter in the touching scene by the lake-side, had given him his commission, and opened a glimpse of the future. It was in that very moment, so solemn, so hallowed, that Peter caught sight of his fellow-disciple John, and turned to Jesus with his question. What would be John's fate? And Jesus replied, 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.' What Peter needed at that moment was not to have his attention diverted to speculations about what the future had in store for the beloved disciple, but to face resolutely the great task Jesus had put into his hands. Anything that would divert his energies into mere speculative channels would be a moral injury to him; and so he is brought back to the thought of his own personal duty.

¶ In his chapter on 'The Boar Hunt' in *Quentin Durward*, Sir Walter Scott shows how the life of King Louis was jeopardized by the sudden division of the pack into two parts. A young boar crossed the track of the animal that the party were pursuing, and, instantly, all the dogs, except the most experienced ones, set out on the new trail. Many of the riders also followed this false scent. But the king was too cunning a sportsman to be so easily drawn aside. He knew that the original quarry was worried and exhausted, whilst the new scent was the scent of a creature that was fresher than the horses and the hounds. Louis held to the first trail, and was soon face to face with the boar that he had so tenaciously pursued. And if the young huntsmen and the young hounds had been equally wise, he would not have been compelled to encounter in solitude the infuriated beast. And had they declined to be distracted, they would have shared the royal exultation at the close of that memorable day.[1]

1. Our Lord did not desire to discourage sympathetic interest in the welfare of others. It would be strange indeed if He did, He, who in word and act preached the principle, 'Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.' Yet it may be one thing to say, 'What shall I do for this man?' and another, and a very different one, to ask, 'What shall this man do?' In the first case, the question turns upon present duty, in the second it turns upon future events. The former word raises the thought of a responsibility that is mine, the latter intermeddles with a care which is really not mine, but God's. And in every such case, as we pass from what is practical to what is curious, and let the thoughts turn from the matters of personal duty to the

[1] D. C. Mitchell.

[1] F. W. Boreham, *A Tuft of Comet's Hair*, 234.

mysteries of Divine administration, the Saviour refuses to lift the veil, saying, 'Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther. The secret things belong unto God, but the things that are revealed belong unto thee to do them. Askest thou, What shall this man do? What is that to thee? Follow thou me.'

¶ Thomas à Kempis tells us that

If you could let men go their way,
They would let you go yours;

and he adds:

We might have peace, great peace,
If we would not load ourselves with others' words and works,
And with what concerns us not.
How can he be long at rest
Who meddles in another's cares,
And looks for matters out of his own path,
And only now and then gathers his thoughts within him?

2. Our human curiosity has always longed to lift that strange veil which shrouds the future. What father and mother would not fain cast a horoscope over their little child's cradle? 'Lord,' we cry, 'what shall this lad do?' This was the irrepressible craving which drove men in old time to question oracles and watch for omens. The same craving leads men still to consult fortune-tellers and palmists, or to listen wistfully for some whisper from the irrevocable dead. They strive if by any means they may unlock the dark door and discover the secret which God keeps for Himself alone. Against all curious prying and peering into the future our Lord uttered His condemnation when He said: 'Take no anxious thought for the morrow.' Sufficient unto the day is the duty thereof; sufficient also the grace for that duty. We may not sit brooding and foreboding over things to come. Ours is a more practical office and a simpler task. We do not know, we can never so much as guess, what things shall befall ourselves, or befall those we love, according to the will of God. But none of these possibilities may turn us aside from the one path in life which is sure and certain, the changeless track marked out for His disciples by the print of Christ's wounded feet.

Hereafter lies with God—enough!
Our path begins from here;
Our next step, be it smooth or rough,
Our Master maketh clear.

No hearts with sacred love elate,
Whose lamps are burning still,
Can linger in such vexed estate
As not to know His will.

Our shades shall never lie so deep,
Our landscape grow so dim,
That we need fail to feed His sheep,
Or cease from following Him.[1]

3. No other answer is vouchsafed to some of our theological problems. That is a noble curiosity which constrains us to ponder such deep questions and meditate on the chief concerns of man. Yet when we begin to ask: 'Lord, what shall the heathen do, who never heard Thy gospel?' 'Lord, what shall Thy Church do, before the end comes?'—we learn that none of these speculations, solemn and absorbing as they are, must be suffered to distract us from simple-hearted, daily devotion to our Lord.

¶ In his essay on 'Truth-Hunting,' Mr Birrell writes out what he calls his 'prescription' as follows: 'As much reticence as is consistent with good breeding upon, and a wisely tempered indifference to, the various speculative questions now agitated in our midst.' That this is a useful and even a valuable prescription for most of us, I am perfectly certain. There is a certain blindness to abstract questions which is desirable in the Christian life. It is not a bad thing to cultivate what Mark Rutherford calls 'the habit of not looking round the corner.'[2]

4. Again, quite apart from vague speculations, there are mysterious, heart-breaking facts in experience for which we find no explanation. Walk through the wards of a hospital or an asylum, look at the cureless cripples and imbeciles, and the question rises up unbidden, irresistible: 'Lord, what shall these men do, and why hast Thou made them thus?' But again the self-same answer warns us that we are too dull to grasp the purpose of that Wisdom whose tender mercies are over all His works in all places of His dominion. It is ours to follow

[1] E. C. Lefroy. [2] A. Alexander, *The Stuff of Life*, 85.

Christ in ministering to the very sufferers whom we must needs commit humbly and blindly to His holy and acceptable and perfect Will. We follow Him most closely when we spend ourselves in trying to lighten, even a little, that awful weight of sadness which for multitudes of human beings is life's product and sum.

5. Curiosity becomes perilous, not because it is in itself evil or irreverent, but because it is so apt to dissipate the soul. Our Lord will have nothing to distract us from simple, personal faith in His own Person. To our subtle doubts and curious fears and eager questionings, He has one reply: 'What is that to thee? Follow thou me.' The stress falls on the last word. He says in effect: 'I am the Answer to all the questions men can ask.' And as we do follow Him faithfully, we discover at last the key to every problem and the clue to every mystery in Christ Himself. He is Himself God's supreme Answer to the enigma of human life—the reward of every labour, the justification of every sorrow, the compensation for every sacrifice, the satisfaction of every desire. There are some, indeed, greatly daring, who do not shrink to ask concerning Christ Himself: 'What shall this Man do, in the end?' Times and seasons come in our own experience when love waxes feeble and lamps burn low, when we hear that horrible freezing whisper: 'What if our faith prove only a divine delusion, nothing but a splendid mistake after all?' Let us have faith to answer in the words of Serenus de Cressy to John Inglesant: 'What is that to us? To those who know Him, as we know Him—better be wrong with Jesus Christ than right with His enemies; better Jesus Christ beaten and betrayed and defeated than all the world beside triumphing and crowned.' At the last, when we end this life in which we are able to give back to Him so little of His love, some of us shall be most of all thankful for this—that as we have followed so imperfectly His blessed footsteps, He has gone before us, still the self-same Christ of whom the gospel tells us—poor and forsaken and despised and persecuted and laughed to scorn. Part of our joy in heaven itself will be the joy of those who have not seen and yet have trusted Him—ignorantly, helplessly, utterly trusted Him with their all.

The Things Which Jesus Did

John xxi. 25.—'And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.'

1. Our first impression in reading this text is that we have here an instance of what we should call Oriental exaggeration. Pulling up a mountain by the power of faith and planting it in the sea; offering to take a speck of dust out of someone's eye when we have a baulk of timber in our own—these and the like phrases were as natural to people in Palestine as the Aramaic dialect in which they were spoken; but they seem strange to our taste. And so we may well think that a life of Jesus which, when written out column after column upon the long strips of papyrus, would occupy more of these rolls than would carpet the surface of the Roman world, is an impossible although picturesque conception not to be taken seriously. We recognize, of course, very soon that a really full Life of Jesus would be immeasurably longer than what we possess. Four little pamphlets, which could be very easily printed in a newspaper, are all we have to tell us of that story. And of those Gospels, as we call them, the shortest and oldest is almost entirely absorbed by two others which copy, abridge, and add to them; and when we use a harmony to see how many separate incidents and discourses or sayings we possess, we see very soon how small a relation the total bears to the fullness of that Life. From morning to evening He was preaching and teaching and healing—sometimes 'without leisure so much as to eat,' sometimes so weary at the end of the day that He could only snatch necessary sleep by taking refuge in the fishermen's boat and crossing to the quiet eastern side of the Lake of Galilee. If only some twentieth-century disciple could have been there with our modern appliances, to turn a cinematograph on that sacred Figure and preserve a picture of every movement, to catch with a phonograph every syllable that fell from Him who spoke as no other man, what a record we should have to-day! Not one page of it would be superfluous or trivial—nothing but what would teach us as nothing else in the world could do. And yet if we had this, and it included the complete record of the thirty quiet years in which He through childhood, boyhood,

early manhood, exhibited the ideal human life to the dull villagers of Nazareth, the books that could be written would not have carpeted the ground of that little town.

2. It is a curious coincidence that the very next words in our New Testament contain something about 'things which Jesus did.' The Book which we call 'Acts of the Apostles'—we do not know what its author called it, or whether he gave it a title at all—opens with some words of preface in which Luke the doctor tells his patron Theophilus, an official in the Civil Service and a Christian, what had been the subject of the book to which he is now writing a sequel. It was to be the record 'of what Jesus *began* to do and to teach' up to the day of His ascension. The most natural explanation of that word *began* is that Luke means the sequel to tell of what Jesus went on to do and to teach *after* His last appearance to human eyes. Whether we take this explanation or an alternative, there can be little doubt that the men who wrote the New Testament would have regarded that Book of Acts as nothing less than a second volume of the story of Jesus. The writer of this Gospel makes Jesus say that one who believed in Him would do the works that He was doing, and greater works still. Are we to infer that there never has been a man with faith during all these ages? For certainly we have never seen miracles like those recorded in this Gospel. We should be puzzled indeed by such words, did not the Master at once add the explanation: 'Greater works than these shall he do, because I am going to the Father.' He was not going *away*, after all. He went to the Father, 'in whom we live, and move, and have our being,' as Paul said, quoting an old Greek poet—to Him who is 'closer to us than breathing, nearer than hands and feet.' He was only going *away* from human weakness into Divine power, from the limitations He submitted to in order to be a real Man, into the unlimited energies of almighty, all-knowing Love. No longer was He bound within what a man, even a perfect man, could do. He had stooped to be a little lower than the angels, less able to help mankind than they, and now He resumed His place high over them all; and His last word was that He would be with us all the days even unto the end of the world.

3. There is one sense in which the continued life of Jesus on earth would be recognized even by those who count Him as nothing more than man. One recalls George Eliot's noble lines:

> Oh may I join the choir invisible
> Of those immortal dead who live again
> In lives made better for their presence!

We may in truth almost reverse Mark Antony's declaration:

> The evil that men do lives after them,
> The good is oft interrèd with their bones.

For God can make the wrath of man praise Him, just as He can clothe with Nature's green the ugly refuse-heaps that man's work leaves. But the good was never buried; it is in its very nature as immortal as God Himself, and lives on in the world, even if unrecognized, for evermore.

But we cannot be content with regarding the immortal influence of Jesus as being merely of the same kind, though greater in degree, when set against that of Paul or Socrates or Buddha. Explain it how we may, there is something absolutely unique about 'the things which Jesus did' all through the centuries which have passed since human eyes last saw His face. There have been countless deeds done in His name of which mankind is ashamed—deeds appallingly contrary to His whole spirit and teaching. We must cut out a great many pages from the record of the Christian Church before it will stand even as an imperfect and blundering copy of the Acts of Jesus; and we must add many pages that tell of deeds done in His spirit by men who never knew His name. But allowing for all these imperfections, what a marvellous story it is that tells of the magic influence of His life and death over people of every age and race and tongue! Lives that nothing else could touch have been dragged out of the vilest depths by the power of the 'old, old story.'

¶ Here is a story told by Dr Donald Fraser about an African convert: 'I knew a man whose hands were red with blood from boyhood, whose manhood was famous for deeds of bravery and wild passionate cruelty. To him God came and the whole current of his life was changed. He became a gentle husband, a tender father, and he was known throughout the land for his

hospitality and courtesy, respected by Government for his progressive activity, loved by black and white alike. He was an ardent Evangelist and was ready for ordination when God took him.

'I saw him die. He lay in the lap of his faithful wife, and sang with her in his own language, "Nearer my God to Thee, nearer to Thee," and while he was still singing he slept, and passed across the river into the Glory.'

Nor is it only in distant places or times that such things have been done. We can see them any day around us. There are Gospels to tell us where Jesus has been to-day, Acts of twentieth-century Apostles of the Redeemer, 'living Epistles, known and read of all men,' true messages from the Father in heaven, and many a revelation of the ways of God to men. We cannot take them down from the shelves of a library, but every one of us may read them if we will. And all of them together heap up the proof that the Jesus who died is alive and among us for evermore.

¶ By now he (Hugh Redwood) had come into touch with the 'Oxford Groups.' These companies of men and women, youths and girls, with the knowledge and love of Christ and the literal fulfilment of His precepts as their driving force and cohesive power, were a leaven within the churches, a powerful factor for Christian unity, and a living proof of God's ability to solve the problems of men and nations. A West End curate wrote to him: the groups had captured him when he was a flourishing civil engineer, and he had gladly left all to follow the Master. He learned of striking conversions and life-changes, occurring in the higher strata of society, among those whom the curate aptly described as 'up-and-outs.' He listened to a one-time specialist from Harley Street, telling how drink had dragged him down, and how God had lifted him up again and made him a winner of souls. A girl of gentle breeding sent him word from Scotland that had she read his book a few months earlier she would have found it incredible. But the groups had captured her too, and because she had 'come into the experience of Christ indwelling, instead of distantly ideal,' miracles had become part of her own life.[1]

4. But 'the books that are being written' come still closer to our own lives. There is a Book being written now about every one of us. It tells not of our deeds and words alone, but of our thoughts. And it tells everything, with a completeness and a truth we could never match if we wrote about ourselves. Each day there is something new set down in that record. And what is written, is written. As the grim old Persian, Omar Khayyam, says:

> The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
> Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
> Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
> Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

And the Day is coming when before the Great White Throne the judgment will be set and the books opened, and the dead will be judged by the things written therein. What will the record be for us? A story of wealth, pleasure, learning, success? We shall have little use for such things then. The one question will be whether our story is a new volume of 'the things that Jesus did.' For if it is, there will be many another yet to be written that will be 'burdened with His name,' and our lives will thus be blessed beyond all thought for evermore. But if we knew of Him and left Him out of our lives, we had better never have been born.

[1] *God in the Shadows*, 119.

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